

‘The Work of the Body; The Body of Work’

An investigation into some of the phenomena at work in the process of creativity, with particular reference to the role of the body, the unconscious, the psyche and the notion of reverberation.

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the process of creativity. The role of the body is considered to be crucial and phenomenology is the adopted philosophical approach. The methodology is investigative and interrogative rather than didactic and emphasizes relationship. The aim is to tease out rather than to offer magisterial theory. The adopted voice varies being objective, personal and conversational. Dreams, unconscious errors and slips are featured. There is emphasis upon psyche throughout. There are two sections: critical analysis and creative work.

The author's physical experience at a poetry reading is recounted. Bachelard's ideas about the poetic image are reviewed. Discovery and making are contrasted and some ideas of the psychological writers, Shorter and Coltart, are examined. Keats's notion of 'Negative Capability' appears alongside some recent medical research in the neurosciences.

The implications of Jaynes's 'bicameral mind' are evaluated together with Plato's attack on poetry in *Republic*. The nature of the Iliadic mind is interrogated. Poetry's bodily impact and the notion of *katokoche* (bodily possession by the muses) are explored. Recent neuro-scientific research into memory is investigated.

How the senses are implicated in the process of making is questioned using comment from writers themselves about the nature of poetry.

Reverberation is acknowledged, in both theory and practice. The 'gut brain' and its relationship to the head brain and Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the body as subject are complemented.

The Romantics and the emergence of the modern psyche are scrutinized. Keats's 'Ode to Psyche' is critiqued. The emergence of a new language and the centrality of sexuality are considered. Some modern psychological ideas on creativity follow.

Robert Nash's notion of the scholarly personal narrative [SPN] aids exploration of the influences and development of the author as a writer. The notion of the hunter is central and the valencies, marriages and associations of words are explored. A coda concludes the critical work.

The creative work under the title of 'Blood Stories' comprises three prose pieces and forty-six poems.

The Bibliography is followed by the Appendix comprising a Synopsis of Process and the work concludes with the End Notes.

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I have noticed that acknowledgements often save up the most important person until last. Clare Lindsay has been most important to me during the five years it took to make this PhD. Although she denies that she has artistic qualities she possesses a deep understanding of the creative process and exhibits it in aspects of her own living, especially her work. Clare 'got' what it was all about early on and her tough and gentle loving throughout has kept me going. Her everyday support has gone far beyond the thesis itself. With loving thanks, it is to you Clare, that I dedicate this body of work.

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Dr Mike Rossington was a great help early on and other supporting members of the cast include those who have facilitated seminars, workshops, lectures and short courses attended along the way; David Constantine, Fred D'Aguiar, Linda France, Jackie Kay, Jack Mapanje, Sean O'Brien, Carol Rumens, Jo Shapcott, Margaret Wilkinson.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- (CY) *Creativity, Selected Readings*. Ed. P.E. Vernon. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- (PP 2005) *Phenomenology of Perception*. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Oxford: Routledge, 2005.
- (SW) *Strong Words modern poets on modern poetry*. Eds. W.N. Herbert & Mathew Hollis. Tarsset: Bloodaxe Books, 2000.
- (GIT) *Letters of John Keats*. Ed. R. Gittings. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- (OED) *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. Ed. C.T. Onions. Third Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

‘The Work of the Body; The Body of Work’

An investigation into some of the phenomena at work in the process of creativity with particular reference to the role of the body, the unconscious, the psyche and the notion of reverberation.

Introduction.

This thesis is concerned with the process of creativity. Of primary interest is the relationship between the body of the maker and the body of work which the maker creates. Equally important is the effect of the body of work upon the reader/listener. The use of the word ‘phenomena’ in the title indicates the main philosophical approach, which is that of phenomenology. Those things which are apprehended by our senses, our experiences, rather than metaphysical explanations, are fore-grounded. Because of the emphasis upon the senses the word ‘sense’ becomes ubiquitous and its meaning shifts throughout the thesis. The overarching question is: ‘What is happening?’

There is a current debate about what exactly a Creative Writing thesis should comprise at PhD level. How long should the ‘creative’ piece/s be? What should be the balance between the creative work and the academic work? Should practice inform theory or vice versa? How can the divergence in word count between a longish novel and a short collection of poems be reconciled? Ultimately, any creative endeavour, if it is to have any merit, must be unique. This will be so whether the thesis is a ‘normal’ one or a ‘creative’ one. Hopefully, in their unique way, both will make some contribution to learning. Certainly both can be highly creative in the widest sense of the word. This

thesis may not look much like another creative enterprise and both may be the better for their differences. A bird-watching analogy occurs to me. Watchers, often operating unconsciously and using their knowledge of general conformation, colour, size, habitat, time of year, will usually begin by placing their sighting into a broad category: “It’s a wader”. Thereafter, certain refinements take place under close scrutiny until the field is narrowed and it turns out to be a Knot, that stout bodied member of the Dunlin group. Hopefully, readers of this work will be able to spot that: “It’s a Creative Writing Thesis”. Whether it will ever be possible, or even desirable, to move towards the same degrees of sub-classification that are available in the bird-watching world, is open to question. Whether it’s a Dunlin or a Knot may be less important than the vital experience of having spotted, and engaged with, something alive.

The methodology of the thesis is intended to complement the content. The procedure is to interrogate and investigate rather than to prove. Possibilities and propositions are suggested and their repercussions considered, rather than definitive theories being subjected to analysis and scientific proof. Approaches are as important as authorities, causality is contrasted with organic growth. Relationship and interpenetration are valued above either linear or vertical structures based upon power, chronology or causality. Weaving in and out, strolling and meandering, are as intriguing as plotting the shortest distance between two points. One aspect is not necessarily more important than another and the relationship, interdependence and concatenation of ideas and phenomena are as vital as their individual functions.

The aim is not to create a magisterial masterpiece based upon corroborated theory but to tease out, to play, to consider some ideas which appear at first sight unusual, untenable even, but to respond with a ‘what if’, rather than a dismissal. These ‘what if’ episodes allow for speculation, which might in turn, lead somewhere. Throughout, the

adopted voice varies, being sometimes objective and detached, sometimes personal, conversational and involved.

Eclecticism is apparent. The approach is not purely academic nor entirely personal, but depends upon the relationship between the two. Personal experiences and third party quotations are used, not only to illustrate and corroborate, but at times they become incorporated into the body of the text. Often quoted at considerable length these passages become embedded: they take up both time and space and help to propel the body of the text rather than merely adding weight. This choice to incorporate and quote extensively is an example of the belief that reciprocation occurs between the maker and the work. During the process of its making, the work calls for attention as it reverberates, working back upon the maker and affecting the process of its own making. Arising from the covenant between the maker and the work is the joy of bringing together, collecting, comparing, contrasting. In this way, now and again, glimpses of a bigger picture emerge.

There are two parts to the thesis. The first part comprises the critical analysis, research, commentary, and the investigation of process. The second part contains the original pieces of creative work comprising three prose pieces and a collection of poems. Questions of order and arrangement proved intriguing; the realisation that the bodily impact of the Heaney reading had to come first was an important moment and gave an impetus and focus which had been lacking so long as other beginnings were being tried. After the first two chapters, which felt quite long and intricate, the third seemed like taking breath. The reverberations picked up in the fourth chapter generated enough energy to carry through almost to the end of the first part. Chapter six, as its title suggests, seeks to throw a bridge between the critical section and the creative section. Whilst there are divisions to be seen; ideas, themes, images, metaphors have managed to cross the boundaries, proving that categories only work to a degree.

Writing both the creative work and the academic work has been an exercise in creativity. However there are sufficient distinctions to substantiate an overall division. Not the least of these is function. A poem, a story, is not intended to perform in the same way as an analysis or a critique. The purpose, the trajectory, are discrete enough to merit separation, though similarities will always infiltrate. The critical chapters are a mixture of the chronological and the thematic, with diversions and interesting by-ways allowed as and when they offered opportunities. An attempt to intermingle the prose pieces within the poetry collection was relinquished as the prose interrupted the reading of the poetry.

I have chosen to preserve, in an appendix, a synopsis of the process of writing this thesis; the four proposals, which stumbled and evolved along the way, and the two reviews which looked backwards at what had been achieved so far. In humans the appendix is a blind tube we can do without. I have chosen to retain one here because it feels useful. These exercises give a partial insight into how the work evolved and may reverberate with other writers. This is an offer of transparency, a disclosure of my own experience of the creative process, which lies at the heart of this thesis. There is a reference back to those days when there was a request from examiners to ‘show your workings’.

The creative pieces consist of both prose and poetry. At times the prose takes on a poetical hue. The fact that the original work is not simply a body of poems or a selection of prose but a little of both is symptomatic of what happened during the making of the thesis as whole. At the outset, some five years ago, the thesis began as a traditional academic piece, intended to explore a particular proposition. I had discovered some years previously, that Freud is alleged to have said that: ‘Wherever I go I find a poet has

been there before me'.¹ As I explored this notion, with the focus largely on verse, something happened. It was the nature of the way in which I was writing my prose that prompted my supervisor to suggest that I consider writing a 'Creative Writing' thesis. This evolution offers an insight into the process whereby this thesis came to look the way it does. Although originally there may have been a rough idea or plan in mind, what has emerged, although remaining true to some original ideas, looks very different from what was imagined. The making of the thesis itself mirrors many of the concerns which it seeks to address. So there arises the question of whether I see myself as a writer of poetry or of prose. The question of how a body of work is formed becomes central. As the work continues to be made it has an effect upon its maker and adjustments become appropriate. Such a process is ongoing and whilst choices are made which eventually determine a final form, the effect of writing the thesis has yet to be fully experienced. The question of what and how I will write from now on remains open.

The six chapters of the critical research and commentary section ask and engage with questions. What happens in the body of the maker during creativity? What is the relationship between the body of the maker and the body of the work made? What role is played by the unconscious during creativity? What exactly is meant by the word 'psyche', and how does it manifest itself? An interrogatory method is applied to these main themes. The place and role of the body, the nature and function of the psyche, particularly the unconscious, the relationship between the maker and the work, phenomenology, form and reverberation, become the court cards of the hand. These are

¹ Despite considerable research there is no reliable evidence to support that Freud ever did make such a remark. Lionel Trilling in *The Liberal Imagination* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970) p. 47 suggests he may have said something very similar in a radio broadcast: "When on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, Freud was greeted as the 'discoverer of the unconscious', he corrected the speaker and disclaimed the title. 'The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious', he said". Personally I find it intriguing that the actual remark which gave rise to the whole thesis may well be beyond proof. It may have been an aside, a casual off the cuff remark or indeed the product of someone else's imagination.

the easily recognizable characters, they are given faces, they rise above the numbers, they are favoured and easily named each time they are dealt.

There is a psychological theme throughout the thesis. This arises not from any particular 'school': Freudian, Jungian, Kleinian, Rogerian or the like, but from a lifelong interest in psyche. So I tell a dream as an offering from my unconscious. Now and then my mistakes and typographical errors are retained and considered as evidence of psychological phenomena at work. For me the psyche is not susceptible to analysis. Psyche's involvement in human affairs is awful, profound, dreadful, and joyful. Her ubiquity is the main reason why I have written this thesis and why I like to sleep with the window open.

Chapter One

“But yet the body is his book”.¹

I would like to begin by relating a personal experience, encountered during a poetry reading given in Edinburgh by Seamus Heaney. There comes a moment when I am struck, quite literally, by one part of a poem. I feel the effect in my gut. I experience a sensation of being gripped and uplifted at the same time. I find myself involuntarily sitting up, stretching, lengthening out, as though drawn up by some energy rising from within. I have never attempted to find the poem since nor have I made any attempt to examine or analyse what happened in theoretical terms. I do however remember the experience very clearly, for each time I recall the moment there is an equivalent sensation low down in my body. It is not as strong as it was on that evening but it remains like a trace, laid down in my viscera.²

Although I would not have used the word then, or even in the intervening period perhaps, I would now describe this moment as phenomenal, in the sense of, ‘cognizable by the senses’. The apprehension, the recognition, was experienced by my senses and was located in a particular part of my body. I have experienced other similar moments to the Heaney episode, when I have been in receipt of words, whether written or spoken. They have had an effect which is apprehended by the body in a way which precedes mental activity. Often the manifestation is in the breath as I find myself letting out a long exhalation which is usually accompanied by a growing desire to exclaim. Sometimes I know I will utter a ‘wow’ or a ‘Yes!’ at such moments. Such an impact can also be brought about by a piece of music or some other creation, often a painting. In such incidents, I experience the reception of the piece of work in my body first. This initial encounter is involuntary, primitive and ineffable.

When David Constantine gave the first of his three Bloodaxe lectures, *Translation is Good for You*, at Newcastle University in 2003, he told the story of how Keats reacted to hearing his friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, read Chapman's Homer:

The effect on Keats is intensely physical—his stare, his shouts—and the response, his conversion of the event into a poem of his own, ['On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'] this takes place in the act of walking home through the waking capital, across the river. He teems like London, he opens like the Thames towards the sea. Then, gift for gift, he sends the poem to his good friend's breakfast table.³

Keats's eyes are opened wide into a stare and his voice cries out. It is unlikely that in the moment Keats was aware of his own stare; he may, or may not, have been aware of shouting out. His bodily reaction to the work is phenomenological, his senses acknowledge the work and the body chooses its own form of witness, in Keats's case, a stare and a shout.⁴

Andrew Motion in his biography *Keats* talks about the creation of the 'Homer' poem observing that 'Keats wrote this sonnet remarkably fast - but while this shows how urgent and exalted he felt', Motion adds, 'often working at night, when his (usually) cramped lodgings had fallen quiet, he habitually stirred himself into a 'fever''.⁵ It will be argued in the next chapter that this is Keats in his *katokoche*, [divine possession by the muses] as Plato would have termed it. Motion lets us know how the state of the body, in its urgency, serves the composition, as the poet creates out of his bodily fever and exultation. It is clear that for Motion the condition of the poet's body is not divorced from the process of making, but rather linked to it. What happens to the body during the process of making is clearly important.⁶

Such bodily responses, both on the part of poet and listener/reader, may be difficult to explain, but this does not mean to say however, that an attempt cannot be made to discuss them. Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), the French philosopher, makes

such an attempt in the introduction to his book *The Poetics of Space*.⁷ Originally trained as a philosopher of science, he turns his attention in this book to the ‘problems posed by the poetic imagination’. (xv) Realising that he will need to adopt a new approach to this question, he chooses the opportunities offered by phenomenology, going on to apply this methodology to an exploration of the poetic image itself. Bachelard confines himself to exploring the image without considering the poem’s composition or the poem as a whole. He is working with the image as the base unit of poetry. At an atomic level he is exploring the elemental nature of the image, believing that there is no history or precedent to assist the reader in this endeavour, because, ‘[o]ne must be receptive, receptive to the image at the moment it appears ...in the very ecstasy of the newness of the image’.⁸ (xv) This newness is something he returns to again and again: ‘[n]or can anything general and coordinated serve as a basis for a philosophy of poetry’. (xv) He continues:

the philosophy of poetry must acknowledge that the poetic act has no past, at least no recent past in which its preparation and appearance could be followed. (xv)

Given that he argues that there is no accepted historical point from which to embark upon this work he suggests:

In order to clarify the problem of the poetic image philosophically, we shall have to have recourse to a phenomenology of the imagination. By this should be understood a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of a man, apprehended in his actuality. (xviii)

And he expands:

Only phenomenology – that is to say consideration of the *onset of the image* in an individual consciousness – can help us to restore the subjectivity of images and to measure their fullness, their strength and their transsubjectivity. (xix)

On one level he clearly feels that the task of considering the poetic image is simple:

The image, in its simplicity, has no need of scholarship. It is the property of a naïve consciousness; in its expression, in its youthful language. The poet in the novelty of his images is always the origin of language. (xix)⁹

For Bachelard the image appeals neither primarily, nor exclusively, to the mind: ‘poetry, rather than being a phenomenology of the mind, is a phenomenology of the soul’. (xx)

The Palestinian poet, Mourid Bargouti, would no doubt agree with Bachelard:

The problem with writing what is outside yourself, writing as part of the collective, is that this will not produce literature unless it has truly become part of yourself – it is no longer ‘outside’. It becomes part of inner structure. There is no point in setting down events, anecdotes. But do events pass over us like mercury on paper? The moment of contact between the event and your soul, that’s where literature is born.¹⁰

Bachelard remains loyal to the precedence of the body over the mind and further cautions us to remember that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the two words ‘mind’ and ‘soul’: ‘the word soul is an immortal word. In certain poems it cannot be effaced, for it is a word born of our breath’(xx)¹¹ We are inextricably involved with the body. In Bachelard’s view the basic atom of poetry is the poetic image and he argues at length that this phenomenon operates on our body, which he points out, includes our soul. So poetry for him becomes a ‘commitment of the soul’ (xxi)

Bachelard is too much of a philosopher to ignore the place of the mind, but here he places it after the initial emergence and impact of the image, which he suggests is a body/soul experience. He sees the mind as being involved in the execution or making of the poem, once the image has manifested itself and operated upon the senses:

In my opinion, soul and mind are indispensable for studying the phenomena of the poetic image in their various nuances, above all, for following the evolution of poetic images from the original state of reverie to that of execution. (xxi)¹²

Having suggested that the image operates phenomenologically, as a happening upon our body and soul, he goes on to ask himself how it is that it works on us in this way. His answer lies in the notion of reverberation:

Needless to say, the reverberation, in spite of its derivative name, has a simple phenomenological nature in the domain of poetic imagination. For it involves bringing about a veritable awakening of poetic creation, even in the soul of the reader, through the reverberation of a single poetic image. By its novelty, a poetic image sets in motion the entire linguistic mechanism. The poetic image places us at the origin of the speaking being. (xxiii)¹³

He does not let us forget, however, that the reverberations which are set up by the image, and which move through us, only operate after the initial emergence or impact of the image has occurred, and then he reminds us that, ‘the image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface’. (xxiii) He explores the relationship between the creator of the image and the recipient of it, the reader. He uses the expression ‘inter-subjectivity’ to alert us to the fact that something is set up between the writer and the reader, and offers the following description of what it is to experience an image by reading:

The image offered us by reading the poem now becomes really our own. It takes root in us. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we could have created it, that we should have created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being. (xxiii)

Bachelard is at pains to point out that bringing critical or analytical lenses to bear on a poetic image serves only to destroy and reject the depth at which the ‘original poetic phenomenon starts’ and impacts upon us. (xxiv) So he says ‘the psychologist fails by trying to “*describe*” his feelings in relation to the image whilst the psychoanalyst also falls short because he must search to “*understand*”. In the very act of understanding he seeks out a context for the image and goes beyond what he calls the ‘poetic logos’’. (xxiv) Bachelard says “never in fact was ‘*traduttore, traditore*’ [the translator is also the betrayer] more justifiably applicable.” (xxiv) Bachelard contends that doctrines which attempt causality, such as psychoanalysis, cannot hope to ‘determine the ontology of what is poetic’, because he says, ‘nothing prepares a poetic image, especially not the

culture, in the literary sense and especially not perception, in the psychological sense’.

(xxiv)

It is interesting to note that Bachelard, though younger, was a contemporary of Freud. He was acquainted with the emerging psychological disciplines and was fond of quoting Jung. Bachelard emphasizes time and again the originality of the poetic image. Can this lend weight to support the remark which has been attributed to Freud: ‘Wherever I go I find that a poet has been there before me’? If Bachelard is right in suggesting that the poetic image always comes first, and has the effect of placing us at the origin, then Freud’s remark would be true because by the time the analyst arrived upon the scene, the poet’s work would already be in existence.

Another way of expressing this notion arises from the use of metaphor. A client in therapy describes himself ‘feeling like an old fridge on a rubbish dump’. The chosen image puts us back to the beginning. From here we can begin to understand the feelings of such an abandoned person. The use of an image is more powerful than the simple statement, ‘I felt abandoned’. If the client and therapist go on to wrestle with and explore this image further, then more detail will emerge, but initially it is the power of the image itself which goes to depth. The use of image in this way is an act of creativity on the part of the client. The image offers a beginning, a moment, the momentum, from which the dialogue begins. Used in this sense it corroborates Bachelard’s idea that the image has the capacity to place us at the origin of the speaking being. Now the client will begin to tell their story in a different way. This is initiation, as introduction, as beginning.

Bani Shorter, a Jungian analyst, has turned her attention to the act of creativity in her book, *Susceptible to the Sacred*.¹⁴ The book is an exploration of the psychological experience of ritual, and her proposition is that ‘ritual mediates self-world relationships’.

(ix) For Shorter, following her Jungian promptings, the individual is seen as occupying

two worlds simultaneously; the outer world of socially conditioned expectations and the inner world of psychic life, which must include ‘the creative acceptance of the archetypal presence of the sacred’. (x)¹⁵ Ritual enables the individual to mediate between these two worlds, or as Shorter puts it, ‘ritual is the experience of what happens in the space between’. (x)

Before reaching her chapter on creativity itself, Shorter makes some observations along the way. It becomes clear that she sees the activity of creating as inextricably linked to the emergence or development of the person doing the creating. To illustrate this, she opens her book with a quotation from Eckermann’s *Conversations with Goethe*, ‘tell me what you create and I shall tell you who you are’. (1)¹⁶ She also makes a distinction between ‘creation’ and ‘creativity’ and quotes from Jacques Barzun, the French-born American, who was the co-founder of the discipline of cultural history:

Creation means making something new and making it out of little or nothing ... creation does not proceed (in the sense of develop), it occurs.
(6)

For Barzun creativity is the power to energize that occurrence. Before that power can come into play, we are again in the realm of phenomenology, the science or study of phenomena. We are concerned with those things which occur. Shorter alludes to the phenomenology, when she talks of the reluctance of her own profession, analytical psychology, to address the dimension of the sacred in its work:

For whatever reasons, whether personal or professional, they have not yet found it easy to access and have no adequate language with which to approach its phenomenology. (ix)

For Shorter it is essential to find a way of engaging with, and remaining connected to, this sacred element. Inherent within it is the image which will emerge, and which in beneficial circumstances will eventually help us to understand, not only who we are, but what we are for. We will come to know what Jung calls ‘The Self’. However, long

before such understanding may develop, there is a need to find a way of engaging, of coming into relationship with, the phenomena themselves. For Shorter one such way is ritual, and in particular, the ritual of creativity.

Shorter is sympathetic to Bachelard and finds support from him in the role played by the muse. The muse can help in the initial engagement with the sacred, for, as Shorter quotes from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Reverie* :

The muse is a notion which should help *to give body to* inspiration and which should make us believe that there is a transcendent subject for the verb 'inspire'. (4)

Bachelard's italics are original and bring us back to the preeminence of the body. Allowing the body to experience the effect of the phenomenon, to embody, to incorporate the occurrence, is crucial to the process. This is bodywork, the work which the body of the maker must do before the body of work can be made. Such work is not easy to describe in words. This is not surprising because it is the work which precedes the words. At this point, like the moment of being struck by the poem in Edinburgh, it is virtually impossible to produce words to express what is happening. This quality is ineffable. It is beyond words, because it is before words. Before the arrival of the words which will eventually form verse or prose, there is work to be done. My argument is that this work is done by the body, mainly by the senses. Mostly it occurs below the threshold of consciousness, but nevertheless forms a crucial part in the process of creativity. Undaunted by this challenge, Shorter shows us what is involved:

The enhancement or nourishment of soul that begets inspired creativity is a mysterious process in which the intrinsic wholeness of the human personality is enlivened by a significance which outlasts the production itself. Experience of mythic forms and images touches and combines with personal awareness so deeply and is often darkly felt that it is not immediately accessible to consciousness. (5)

There are two points here. First, Shorter alerts us to the stage when the experience of creativity is proceeding but is not yet ‘accessible to consciousness’. She could have used the word unconscious; however, her phrasing is precise. There is a subtle but significant difference between saying something is going on in the unconscious and saying that it is ‘not immediately accessible to consciousness’. Her distinction allows for the possibility of a space or time when creativity is developing neither in the conscious or the unconscious, but in a borderland between the two. This is an example of moving beyond a simply binary division into a realm where relationship **between** becomes significant, where hard lines of delineation break down into a movement, into a reciprocation.

Second, Shorter’s words are mysterious. The tenor of the passage is ‘other’. I use ‘other’ to mean alternate, different from the one in question, and also in a loose psychological sense, to indicate the opposite, the hidden or what lies in the shadow. However, as Lionel Trilling, the American Professor of Literature and Criticism at Columbia University, pointed out:

The hidden element takes many forms and is not necessarily ‘dark’ and ‘bad’; for Blake the ‘bad’ was the good, while for Wordsworth and Burke what was hidden and unconscious was wisdom and power, which work in despite the conscious intellect.¹⁷

The late nineteenth-century German word ‘unheimlich’, uncanny or weird, also carries some of the sense of ‘other’.

I believe the notion of mystery lies deep at the heart of the creative process, and that it is not a dynamic easily susceptible to precise definitions and divisions. In setting such a tone Shorter is offering us the possibility of entering into an experience rather than seeking to solve it. Familiar with notions of archetypes, the transcendent and the collective unconscious, Shorter no doubt feels at home with mystery.

What about poets? David Constantine, poet and translator, recently told a group of apprentice poets that he understood the three major constituents necessary for the accomplishment of a poem to be: invention, realization and recognition.¹⁸ Only invention need concern us for the time being. Constantine alerted his listeners to the meaning of the word. In addition to its modern sense of the ‘contrivance or production of a new method’ it has an older meaning: ‘the action of coming upon or finding’, that is, discovery. Coincidentally, Shorter, is intrigued by this very point:

I second the philosopher’s proposition that there is a need to restore to the word ‘invention’ the double connotation originally conveyed by the Latin *inventio* which meant both discovery and creation. (3)

Although at this point she is talking about the impetus to change in an individual, her words are valid for our understanding. She says, ‘without discovery of an underlying process and pattern there is little impetus for change’. (3) This recalls Bachelard’s insistence on the originality and eternal newness of the image. It is there before us, waiting to be discovered.

Stephen Spender in, ‘The Making of a Poem’ makes the same point succinctly when he says, ‘there is nothing we imagine which we do not already know’. (CY 72) There is further corroboration for this notion of ‘discovery’ from an unlikely source, a mathematician. Henri Poincaré considered the dynamic of mathematical creation in *The Foundations of Science* published in 1924, a work in which he incorporated an earlier piece on creation, first published in *Science et Méthode* in 1908.¹⁹ First, he allows for the idea that creation consists not so much of inventing something new out of nothing, but more of choosing from ‘entities already known’. (CY 80) Second, he believes the unconscious plays a vital role in creativity. He asks himself, ‘in fact, what is mathematical creation?’ and goes on to answer:

It does not consist in making new combinations with mathematical entities already known. Anyone could do that, but the combinations so made

would be infinite in number and most of them absolutely without interest. To create consists precisely in not making useless combinations and in making those which are useful and which are only a small minority. Invention is discernment, choice. (CY 80)

It is implicit within Bachelard's argument that the elements of newness pre-exist. The creator then is not involved in an act of creation as defined by Barzun, but in an act of creativity, an act that consists largely of choosing from already known components. This echoes a view expressed by the poet Linda France, who said that writing consists of a series of choices.²⁰ For Poincaré there is more as he goes on to wonder how this choice is exercised:

How to make this choice I have before explained; the mathematical facts worthy of being studied are those by which, by their analogy with other facts, are capable of leading us to the knowledge of a mathematical law just as experimental facts lead us to the knowledge of a physical law. They are those which reveal to us unsuspected kinship between other facts, long known, but wrongly believed to be strangers to one another. (CY 80)²¹

Here creativity is choosing to bring into relationship things 'long known' but so far, apparently, unconnected. Underlying the process a 'law' is revealed, in Poincaré's case, a mathematical law. Poincaré and the other writers so far mentioned, are agreed on some of the phenomena at work in the creative process.

They argue that, far from consisting of inventing something new out of nothing, creativity involves working with elements which already exist in some form or another, but which require something more to reveal them fully. Whilst writers may go about the making, the poesis, in an individual way, the common ground is the notion that something is already given. Spender, referring to Paul Valéry's phrase, '*une ligne donnée*', writes, 'one line is given to the poet by God or by nature, the rest he has to discover for himself'. (CY 68)²² Again we find 'discover' being used, rather than 'make'. Something is given which is latent, and the poet's function is to actualize its

potential. In so doing, some fundamental or underlying law will be revealed, a law which pre-exists the making of the work, a law which will demand recognition from the maker. Looked at in this way, all individual acts of creativity are particular examples of underlying principles. This is the idea behind abstract nouns, such as, 'Beauty'. A beautiful sonnet then becomes one specific example of 'Beauty'.

Another contemporary writer endorsing the idea of discovery as opposed to invention, is Nina Coltart, an English psychoanalyst. Coltart entitles her book, 'Slouching towards Bethlehem' a quote from Yeats's poem '*The Second Coming*'.²³ Coltart explores the central image of the poem, the 'rough beast'.²⁴ It is interesting how Yeats himself introduces us to the creature in his poem. He is musing on the idea of a second coming:

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man

Yeats claims that he does not invent this image out of nothing, it comes to him, appears to him, from out of the spirit of the world. The creature is already existing, ready to reveal itself, as yet a mystery, its purpose unknown, its precise form not yet identifiable, but nevertheless there. Appropriately, the poem ends not with an answer, but with a question:

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

The task at this point is not to answer this question. Indeed it may not be susceptible to an answer.²⁵ It is more important to acknowledge what is going on in the creative process. It is more about discovery and revelation than a making afresh out of nothing, more of an experience and a questioning, than an attempt at a metaphysical answer.

Coltart sees the rough beast as analogous to the persona of the analyst and to the work of analysis itself. Her book's opening lines are intriguing:²⁶

This paper was first given as a contribution to the English-speaking Conference of Psychoanalysts in 1982. The Conference was in the form of a symposium, whose overall title was simply 'Beyond Words'. This is an expanded version of my original paper. After I had agreed to write this paper, my mind went blank for quite a long time. Then I began to realize that a paper for a symposium whose overall title was 'Beyond Words' appropriately had to be generated in that very area, namely, where blankness seemed to be. After a while, the title for the paper announced itself. (1)

Two points occur here. First, the ineffable quality that she speaks about. However rather than being beyond words what she is really saying is that her task at that stage is before words. Coltart is echoing the process we have considered previously. There is work carried out before the appearance of words. She describes the struggle to entitle her paper, before there are words to do so. And then out of blankness the title announces itself.²⁷ The title is already there and the time comes when it springs forth, introducing itself to the author. The timing of that introduction may well be the subject of further enquiry but it is clear that Coltart, like Thomas, sees the title not as arising out of her own creativity but as coming from elsewhere, like Yeats's beast perhaps, from out of the 'spirit of the world'.

Coltart records her reaction to the arrival of her title: 'I was wary of it, since it seemed both eccentric and religious. But it stuck tenaciously.' (1) It is tempting to wonder whether she uses eccentric here to mean whimsical, or whether, given part of the second line of Yeats's poem, 'the centre cannot hold', the eccentricity is already hinting at the dislocation of the centre. Whichever use she means, she declares it also seemed religious. This echoes Valéry saying that the given line can come from God, or from nature, and it reverberates with other commentators who state that writing contains a

religious or spiritual dimension. Spender noted that, 'in poetry, one is wrestling with a god' (CY 75) ²⁸

Secondly, Coltart says the title was tenacious; that it had a quality of cohesiveness, firmness of purpose. The offered line, or in this case the title, has something about it that will not be gainsaid. It calls for the work to be done, to realize what is offered. Coltart expands upon the beast as metaphor for the analyst himself or herself, for the therapeutic relationship and also the emergence of the patient:

It is of the essence of our impossible profession that in a very singular way we do not know what we are doing. Do not be distracted by random associations to this idea. I am not undermining our deep, exacting training; nor discounting the ways in which – unlike many people who master a subject and then just do it, or teach it, - we have to keep at ourselves, our literature and our clinical cross talk with colleagues. All these daily operations are the efficient, skillful and thinkable tools with which we constantly approach the heart of our work, which is a mystery. The day that one qualifies as an analyst, the analyst that one is *going to be* is a mystery. (2)

I would like to reframe and extend this last sentence. The day that one qualifies as a writer/poet, the writer/poet that one is going to be is a mystery and the writing/poetry that one is going to make is equally mysterious. Perhaps poets do not always know precisely what they are doing.

At this point in my writing I dream this dream:

I am walking away from the White House, alone. Overhead flies a model plane which flies away behind me and into the building. There is an explosion, perhaps even a small nuclear one, there is an orange glow from the building. The president has been assassinated and I am clearly part of the plot though I have no idea what part I played.

Now I am at the house where I grew up as a child and my parents and my son who is aged about seven or eight are there. There is a cage in the lavatory about a metre cubed in size, big enough to allow a person inside if they squatted down. It is made with a thin timber frame and covered in chicken wire. It has 'doors' to one side which are fastened by screws which go through the frame and screw into a wooden slat on the inside. It is as if everyone knows I am implicated in some way with what has happened in America but no one speaks about it. It is also important that I take the two screws out which hold the doors. This I do. I also know I should destroy the cage, it is evidence in some way but I

know that even if I take it apart and outside and burn it there will be microscopic traces left which might incriminate me.

On waking I think about the dream and can make no sense whatsoever of the cage. It is a symbol or a metaphor which carries no apparent meaning for me. It is a while before I realize the dream relates to the creativity I have been writing about. The cage is like the rough beast. It exists and I am familiar with its appearance, shape and size but at this time it seems unborn in the sense of carrying no discernible current meaning. Of course the screws have been taken out and therefore it has been opened, but to all intents and purposes it appears empty. Whatever will come of it is not apparent at this point. There is a mood of implication within the dream. No doubt this is appropriate; one is implicated in one's own life. No amount of destruction of evidence can remove this responsibility. The actualization of one's life [life's work] is not capable of delegation. One might seek to avoid, deny or obfuscate, but such a fact is undeniable. This actualization is also mysterious in the sense that what one is to become is unknown.

Coltart resumes her theme of becoming an analyst when she continues:

Ten years later, we may just about be able to look back and discern the shape of the rough beast - ourselves as analysts in embryo - as it slouches along under the months and years until, its hour come round at last there is some clear idea of ourselves as analysts. (2)

and then she goes on to add:

We have been waiting attentively, in Freud's own words, 'for the pattern to emerge'. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be taught by the late Dr Bion [Wilfred R Bion, a British psychoanalyst and pioneer in group dynamics] value the stress which he laid on the need to develop the ability to tolerate not knowing; the capacity to sit it out with a patient, often for long periods, without any real precision as to where we are, relying on our regular tools and our faith in the process to carry us through the obfuscating darkness of resistance, complex defences, and the sheer unconsciousness of the unconscious. (3)

This passage recalls Keats's statement about Negative Capability:

At once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason – Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrallium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. (GIT 43)

However, before looking at Keats in detail, there are two additional features from Coltart which deserve further attention. First, the passing reference to Freud discloses that he admitted to the notion that there is a pattern already existing which it is the duty of the analyst to attend upon in its emergence. Second, is her wonderful phrase, ‘the sheer unconsciousness of the unconscious’. We truly do not, and can not know, what goes on in the unconscious. However the unconscious is also like the rough beast. We know of its existence, we know roughly what it looks like and in the fullness of time, after sufficient slouching, some aspect of it surely will be born to us and reveal itself.

At the risk of deepening the notion of mystery even further I want next to relate a personal reading experience and then go on to look at some intriguing words from Wilson Harris. At the time of writing this section of the thesis I am also reading *Moby-Dick*, as a member of a book group. Following the night of the ‘White House’ dream I read a chapter in the morning which caught my attention. Melville is describing the skeleton of a sperm whale. He tells of visiting Tranque, one of the islands of the Arsacides where, as a guest of the king, he is shown a whale skeleton which had been washed up and then transported by the people to an inland glen where it is now serving as a temple. At the same time the skeleton is being overgrown by the vegetation:

It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen; the trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap; the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver’s loom, with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures. All the trees, with all their laden branches; all the shrubs, and ferns and grasses; the message carrying air; all these unceasingly were active. Through the lacing of the leaves, the great sun

seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure. Oh busy weaver! Unseen weaver!—pause! —one word!—whither flows the fabric? What palace may it deck? Wherefore all these ceaseless toilings? Speak, weaver!—stay thy hand but one single word with thee! Nay!—the shuttle flies—the figures float from forth the loom; the freshet-rushing carpet for ever slides away. The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice; and by that humming, we too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it. For even so it is in all material factories. The spoken words that are inaudible among the flying spindles; those same words are plainly heard without the walls, bursting from the opened casements. Thereby have villainies been detected. Ah, mortal! then, be heedful; for so in all this din of the great world's loom, thy subtlest thinkings may be overheard afar.

Now, amid the green, life-restless loom of that Arsacidean wood, the great, white, worshipped skeleton lay lounging—a gigantic idler! Yet, as the ever-woven verdant warp and woof intermixed and hummed around him, the mighty idler seemed the cunning weaver; himself all woven over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure; but himself a skeleton. (489)

We see here a central metaphor, the great sun as a flying shuttle, being employed to weave the making and emergence of something constantly changing in its formation. At the same time beneath the figures formed by the flowers, the warp and woof form the underlying structure, upon which the 'freshet-rushing carpet for ever slides away'. There is a plea by Melville to the sun-weaver to hold still for a moment: 'stay thy hand but one single word with thee', but, 'Nay', the shuttle flies and the effect upon the god-weaver and upon the observer who looks upon the loom, is to be deafened. Our sense of hearing being so assaulted we can make no sense in the moment and yet the process goes on, the shuttle flying. This is the work the body must do - to allow itself to be assaulted, overwhelmed by the din until it can step outside itself and hear the words that are carried on 'the message-carrying air'.²⁹ And all the time we are reading this passage we are hearing the rhythm of the loom. We know that beneath everything something is proceeding which has a beat attached to it. We know this because we know that our body registers, albeit unconsciously, the passage of the sun as a daily shuttle across the sky. Jungians would probably employ the word archetype at this stage to indicate that already

within us are patterns of sound and movement laid down, waiting to register against the sounds outside.

In an essay entitled *Soul Searching*, AS Byatt explores what she calls, ‘the great unresolved question—where does the mind end and the body begin?’³⁰ She is much taken with the work of Sir Charles Sherrington who shared the Nobel Prize for physiology in 1932. He studied the brain and came up with the term ‘synapses’ for the junction of two nerve-cells. What intrigues Byatt is his use of metaphors to describe the mind, and she quotes what she considers to be one of the best known that Sherrington uses to describe the waking brain, the “head-mass”:

an enchanted loom where millions of flashing shuttles weave a dissolving pattern, always a meaningful pattern though never an abiding one. (4)³¹

The parallel with Melville’s image is so striking it is tempting to wonder if Sherrington had read Melville’s passage in *Moby-Dick*. Bachelard’s earlier comment is a reminder of how **both** soul and mind are required, not one or the other. The secret, if there is one, is to remember that whatever binaries are possible, it is, in the end, their relationship that prevails over their division:

In my opinion, soul and mind are indispensable for studying the phenomena of the poetic image in their various nuances, above all, for following the evolution of poetic images from the original state of reverie to that of execution. (xxi)

To conclude this chapter I want to explore the idea that even the word ‘relationship’ is not entirely adequate to describe the mystery involved in the dynamic between the various phenomena at work in the process of creativity. Wilson Harris in *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill* has this to say:³²

This was a signal of the phenomenon of creativity, linkages between characters and authors, linkages between a painted world that paints the painter even as the painter paints, a sculpted world that sculpts the sculptor as the sculptor sculpts, a written world that writes the writer as the writer writes ... Nature appears to sleep (when nature seems passive), the

psyche appears to sleep (when the dreamer dreams and appears to forget his dream), but nature suddenly acts and erupts, the dream acts upon and erupts in the dreamer, and becomes the visibility of meaning within a fiction of co-relationship.³³

In 'PhD Second Outline', [Appendix 4], which was written in the second year of this thesis I wrote an extended exploration of this passage. It seems useful at this point, to revisit what Harris has to say because he highlights once again the difficulty of form and of choice. Would it be better to bring that early draft, [Appendix 4], suitably adjusted, into the main body of the text at this point? Is it more useful to leave it as a draft to refer to and as an indicator of how the whole thesis has developed? Given that it has been preserved as a draft is there anything which can usefully be added now? It is worth noting that within the creation of a piece of work, be it a thesis, or a poem, or a story, it is unlikely that the same point is not visited more than once. Admittedly the demand on the reader would be increased. There would be a sense of dislocation perhaps, a feeling of going over old ground, at worst a sense of jumping about, of losing continuity. Ultimately, it is hoped that the benefits of a second visit outweigh the difficulties. Looking merely at the 'finished' version seldom tells the whole story inherent within the process of production. As Harris suggests, as the work proceeds it works back upon the maker and both are affected in this reverberatory process. A thesis, like this one, which sets out to look at the process of making might be forgiven for the preservation of evidence which helps to show what happened along the way. In particular how a passage may work back upon other passages which need to be revisited as a result of the process.

Rather than more investigation into what Harris has to say, what is most interesting is how it relates to the other ideas, propositions, passages and explorations just considered. Take Keats's letter again. He admonishes Coleridge for missing a great opportunity because he is incapable of living with just a 'half knowledge'. Keats

describes Coleridge's loss as 'a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery'. Keats is quite literally getting to the heart of the matter. The Penetralium is that innermost part of a building, usually a temple, where the most sacred shrine is situated, the holy of holies.³⁴ Occasionally, it would seem, an isolated verisimilitude can be caught from such a place. Quite what Keats had in mind by the use of the word verisimilitude cannot be known for sure but the word means: that which has the appearance of truth, that which appears to accord with the facts. Maybe this is as far as any quest into a mystery can proceed, to that point where something is vouchsafed which **appears** to be true. The emboldening seems inevitable. We can never know for sure but when we encounter a passage like that from Harris, or like that from *Moby-Dick*, or from Keats, maybe we sense that something has been offered which has the appearance of a truth. Perhaps we sense this as much as know it. Most of all we may have to learn to settle for a glimpse, at best a series of snapshots. Seldom are we offered the whole of the bigger picture in glorious technicolour detail.³⁵

Recent advances in the neurosciences: neurobiology, neuroanatomy, neurology, and neuropsychology, support many of the ideas just considered. Antonio Damasio, Professor of Psychology, Neuroscience and Neurology at the University of Southern California, is well known for writing about the relationship between emotion, reason and the human brain in *Descartes' Error*, published in 1994.³⁶ Damasio states that the brain not only consists of many individual and complex systems, but that the systems then relate to one another making their interdependence and interpenetration even more mysterious. In addition he believes that the split between body and mind was an error and that the mind actually depends upon the body and the emotions to make sense of anything.

Damasio writes:

I began to write this book [*Descartes' Error*] to propose that reason may not be as pure as most of us think it is or wish it were, that emotions and feeling may not be intruders in the bastion of reason at all: that they may be enmeshed in its networks, for worse *and* for better. (xii)

And then he adds:

Further, I propose that human reason depends upon several brain systems, working in concert across many levels of neuronal organization, rather than on a single brain center. (xiii).

Damasio is echoing in scientific language the weaving metaphors offered by Melville in *Moby-Dick* and Harris in *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*. He is also familiar with phenomenology and considers feeling to be a 'human phenomenon'. Outlining the last of his main themes for his book he writes:

This book is also about a third and related topic: that the body, as represented in the brain, may constitute the indispensable frame of reference for the neural processes that we experience as the mind; that our very organism rather than some absolute external reality is used as the ground reference for the construction we make of the world around us and for the construction of the ever-present sense of subjectivity that is part and parcel of our experiences; that our most refined thoughts and best actions, our greatest joys and deepest sorrows, use the body as yardstick. (xvi)

Donne likened the body to a book in his poem, Damasio chooses to describe it a yardstick. Several writers suggest weaving metaphors. What seems clear is that there is common ground in seeing a relationship between the body and the mind and that the many complex systems in both body and brain also interrelate. Many reverberations are taking place concurrently, running alongside one another in a dynamic of interrelationship. Neuroscience has been able in recent years to lend some scientific weight to the ideas of the writers. However, Damasio is also aware that the complexity of what is happening, especially in the brain, is such that he cautions:

Perhaps the complexity of the human mind is such that the solution to the problem can never be known because of our inherent limitations. Perhaps

we should not even talk about a problem at all, and speak instead of a mystery, drawing on a distinction between questions that can be approached suitably by science and questions that are likely to elude science for ever. (xviii)

For Damasio, as a neuroscientist, the brain may be the Penetralium, but he knows only too well that the mystery is far from solved.³⁷

Chapter Two

In The Beginning Were The Voices

“I shall state my thesis plain. The first poets were gods.”

These sentences belong to Julian Jaynes and come from his book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*.³⁸ Jaynes (1920-1997) was an American psychologist, a graduate of Harvard and Professor of Psychology at Princeton from 1966 to 1990. His ideas about the bicameral mind caused huge controversy at the time of their publication but subsequently have had some influence on the work of others, including Daniel Dennet and Steven Pinker.³⁹

In order to appreciate what Jaynes is proposing it is necessary to understand something of his idea of the bicameral mind. Bicameral, literally meaning ‘having two chambers’, has come to be used as a term to describe legislatures which possess two ‘houses’. But for Jaynes the chambers were in the mind; physiologically they were the two hemispheres of the brain. He believed that in early man, one chamber, which he thought had executive power, was occupied by a god[s] and the other, the follower part, was called man. Originally, neither part was conscious, and the man part simply carried out the commands of the god part, which told the man part what to do. Jaynes believed these commands came to the man part across the passageways linking the two sides of the brain and were heard as ‘voices’ from within. Jaynes sees the development of what we understand to be the modern form of consciousness arising from the breakdown of the bicameral mind in this early form. However he indicates certain current characteristics which he says are evidence of its previous existence, for example, the voices heard in schizophrenia and glossolalia [speaking in tongues].⁴⁰ He also postulates, whilst admitting the evidence is only inferential, that these internal voices spoke in verse. He

likens this to the early poet/chanters, the *aoidoi*, in Greece, the Oracles, the Hebrew prophets and others, whom he believed also sang or chanted in verse:

Poetry began with the bicameral mind. The god-side of our ancient mentality, at least in a certain period of history, usually or perhaps always spoke in verse. This means that most men at one time, throughout the day, were hearing poetry (of a sort) composed and spoken within their own minds. (361)

The modern notion of composition would have been impossible at this stage. Jaynes contends that 'bicameral men did not imagine; they experienced'. (371) Poetry was what they heard from the gods who spoke by way of the voices within. Poets then spoke, or more likely sang or chanted, the words they heard. Jaynes was fully aware of the controversial nature of his ideas but sought support from modern writers to corroborate his contention. So he tells us that Milton spoke of his, 'Celestial Patroness, who ... unimplor'd ... dictates to me my unpremeditated Verse', Blake had his visions, and Rilke 'is said to have feverishly copied down a long sonnet sequence that he heard in hallucination. (375) ⁴¹

Jaynes's intriguing picture is of Iliadic man, going about everyday tasks, hearing all the while the internal voices of the god/s, who are speaking in verse. However, this was only one strand of an even bigger picture which Jaynes was trying to establish. The second, and perhaps more important strand was that he saw consciousness as an 'invention of an analog world on the basis of language, paralleling the behavioural world'. (66) So he concluded:

For if consciousness is based on language, then it follows that it is of a much more recent origin than has been supposed. Consciousness come after language! The implications of such a position are extremely serious. (66) ⁴²

Jaynes made another point which he set out in the form of a series of questions at the beginning of his chapter 'Of Poetry and Music':

Why has so much of the textual material we have used as evidence in earlier chapters been poetry? And why, particularly in times of stress, have a huge proportion of the readers of this page written poems? What unseen light leads us to such dark practice? And why does poetry flash with recognitions of thoughts we did not know we had, finding its unsure way to something in us that knows and has known all the time, something, I think, older than the present organization of our nature? (361)⁴³

Applying the methodology stated in the introduction, there is a requirement to set out the propositions being offered and to explore their possible repercussions and implications. Jaynes proposed four ideas:

1. The first poets were gods who spoke in verse.
2. Poetry was received by and emanated from unconscious minds.
3. Consciousness proceeds from language and therefore comes after it.
4. Poetry recognises something in us which is older than our present nature.

First, it needs to be said that it is not legitimate to separate out these propositions in the way that has just been done, into a neat numbered list. They depend upon each other for their existence. Rather than separating them out they need to be seen as cohering. Having made this point, a dynamic emerges. There is a desire to break down into units, to separate out into manageable bites, to discern the individual items of the recipe, whilst at the same time realizing that there is a tendency, an inevitability, for the parts to enter into relationship. Out of this interdependence and interpenetration something emerges which is greater than the sum of the parts. It becomes relevant to remember this dynamic tension between the need to name and understand the parts, whilst at the same time, appreciating the relationships inherent within the whole. This tension infiltrates the fabric of this thesis.

So, what are the repercussions of Jaynes's proposals?

- 1 That poetry, originally, may have had strong religious/sacred/spiritual connections.

- 2 That the unconscious is implicated in the creation of poetry.
- 3 That poetry has the capacity to remind us of things we have always known but have forgotten.
- 4 That since the bicameral mind has broken down, mankind's psychological makeup is different from the way it once was.

This approach offers both the dangers and opportunities of exponential growth. From these initial propositions and implications what else might follow? For example: if poetry can take us back to forgotten things/times, how far back can it go and what sort of things can it reveal? If mankind's consciousness is different now from before, does this imply that psyche, or whatever we mean by our psychological/human nature, can change? Given the risk of losing focus and eschewing the desire to explore emerging opportunities, there is a call for location, both in space and time.

Jaynes is concerned with Greece in the immediate pre-Homeric period and with the time when the Iliad was emerging, a period he places between about 1230BC and 900 or 850 BC when, eventually, the poem came to be written down. As he says:

I propose here to regard the poem as a psychological document of immense importance. And the question we are to put to it is: What is mind in the Iliad? (69)

He answers his own question:

The answer is disturbingly interesting. There is in general no consciousness in the Iliad...And in general therefore, no words for consciousness or mental acts. The words in the Iliad that in a later age come to mean mental things that have different meanings, all of them more concrete. The word *psyche*, which later means soul or conscious mind, is in most instances life substances, such as blood or breath: a dying warrior bleeds out his *psyche* onto the ground or breathes it out in his last gasp. (69)

Jaynes argued that, 'Iliadic man did not have subjectivity as we do; he had no awareness of his awareness of the world, no internal mind-space to introspect upon', and that he was

governed by the dictates of the gods, exhibiting nothing of the free will we would later come to associate with human nature. (75) He describes the gods as a combination of voices, images, organizations of the central nervous system, hallucinations, occurrences and other phenomena, that appear to mankind, which in turn, is obedient to their directions. So he concludes:

The Trojan War was directed by hallucinations. And the soldiers who were so directed were not at all like us. They were noble automatons who knew not what they did. (75)⁴⁴

Jaynes's argument proceeded to show how, as the bicameral mind begins to break down from this point onwards, then consciousness is allowed to emerge in embryonic form. His proposition has implications for what will follow in this thesis, especially in terms of how, from our present standpoint, we look back on this early form of the human psyche.

The breakdown of the bicameral mind must have proceeded at some pace because only four hundred years later, but still in Greece, Plato (c427-347BC), the Athenian philosopher-dramatist, is setting out a variety of propositions in his *Republic*.⁴⁵ Robin Waterfield, the translator of a new edition for Oxford World's Classics, believes that *Republic* operates on more than one level. One possible analysis he offers is between what he calls the 'hard' aspects of the book, the political and other external issues and the 'soft' aspects, namely the individual, psychological, moral and ethical issues faced by individuals. He suggests *Republic* should be seen, not as considering politics in the real world, but as a paradigm, illustrating an imaginary community. He believes what Plato really wants us to understand is the individual. Essentially, Waterfield is saying that Plato is asking: 'what is it to be human?'

Plato is dealing with mankind in a different way from the singers of the Iliad. Gone are the 'noble automatons' to be replaced by people who have begun to be concerned with the human condition.⁴⁶ It is no longer possible, as it was for

Agamemnon, to say, when Achilles accuses him of stealing his mistress: 'It was not me but the Gods who bade me do it'. Nor would Achilles now simply accept this explanation as satisfactory, as he did then. Plato sees men as having self-consciousness, being responsible for their thoughts and actions, being faced with moral and aesthetic dilemmas. Ultimately he believes the moral and ethical man is one who is able to harness his reason and allow it to dominate his thinking and behaviour. As Waterfield observes:

In short, Plato's vision is of a rationally ordered, teleological universe, where everything has its place and its purpose. (lv)

Plato is concerned about how to educate the guardians and the Philosopher Kings so they will become the best possible rulers for Athenian society. *Republic* ranges widely to include topics outside the remit of this thesis but three of Plato's propositions are relevant.

- 1 That there exists something called 'types', and they play a part in what it is to be human.
- 2 That poetry has power and is threatening to the idea of a rational, ordered society.
- 3 Though not stated explicitly, there is a link between poetry and the body, in particular the senses.

Waterfield is helpful in setting out an exposition of what he calls, 'The Work of Types':

In considering types, the first idea that probably comes to mind is that they are what we call concepts. I carry in my mind a concept, whiteness, which I have gained by attending to various instances of whiteness through my life; this concept enables me to apply the term 'white' every time I receive the same or closely similar sense-impressions again.

In his middle period Plato would want to qualify this to a certain, important extent. Instead of each of us being born with a mental *tabula rasa* and acquiring concepts such as whiteness, Plato wants to say that we already have a latent knowledge of whiteness of which we are reminded by particular perceived instances of whiteness. This is an important qualification because it takes concepts out of our minds, so to speak, and awards them some kind of independent existence. *We do not invent them;*

we discover them. They are properties, external to our minds, although they may function in our minds as concepts. (My italics) (xlv) ⁴⁷

Parallels appear between what Plato says and what Jung later came to understand as the nature and function of what he called the ‘archetypes’. Ann Ulanov in her chapter, *Jung and Religion: the opposing Self*, explains:

Jung defines the personal layer of the unconscious as a gathering of complexes, clusters of energy, affect, and image that reflect the conditioning of our early life. There, drawn well down into us, we find all those who have had formative effects on us, parents, friends, lovers, of whatever age or place in our lives. Our complexes show the influence of our cultural milieu, the colourations of class, race, sex, religion, politics, education. At the heart of each complex an archetypal image dwells. Engaging that image takes us through the personal unconscious into a still deeper layer that Jung calls the objective psyche. The archetypes compose its contents, and deep analysis means identifying and dealing with the particular sets of primordial images that operate within us. ⁴⁸

So beauty, for example, may be a ‘type’ that we discover, something that we already have some idea of, rather than something that we make. So Plato urges:

Let’s return, on this basis, to the give and take of conversation with that fine fellow who doesn’t acknowledge the existence of beauty itself or thinks that beauty itself has any permanent and unvarying character. (200)

This passage prompts Waterfield to explore in a footnote:

Permanent and unvarying character: Plato’s technical usages of the Greek word *idea* and its cognate *eidos* are usually nowadays translated ‘Form’ – as in Plato’s famous Theory of Forms. This is unsatisfactory, however: the word ‘form’ is opaque in contexts like ‘the form of beauty’: and it implies physical appearance alone, whereas the Greek word implies ‘what enables us to identify something’, which is far broader than just physical appearance. There is no finally satisfying translation; I use ‘character’ for *idea* and ‘type’ for *eidos*. The following definitions of ‘type’ from my dictionary are relevant: ‘a distinguishing mark; a foreshadowing; an exemplar; a model or pattern; a kind; the general character of a class’. (414)

Plato was keen, some might say desperate, to prove an underlying meaning and purpose in everything. He also wanted to show that such purpose and meaning is basically good, because it comes from god, and god is good. His use of the ‘types’ and his exploration of

form are used in service of this overarching philosophy. So when he comes to look at what he calls the style of a piece of work, he ends up suggesting that only certain styles should be allowed. In his desire to impose form, or to restrict the variety of forms, Plato was also seeking a place of safety.

A diversion might prove helpful at this point. The Greeks of Plato's day were well aware of the existence of what have become known as The Platonic Forms or Solids. These regular polyhedra [from the Greek meaning 'many faces'] are characterized by having all faces as regular polygons. There are five platonic solids, there must be five, and there cannot be more than five. This is because at least three faces must come together at each vertex and the sum of the interior angles of the meeting faces must be less than 360 degrees. Hence the five shapes are tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron and icosahedron. Inclined to correlate mathematics with religious truth the Greeks found the fact that there were only five solids intriguing. Plato himself, following the earlier philosopher Empedocles, decided these forms must be the basic building blocks of the universe and attributed to each, one of the elements. To the tetrahedron, fire; to the cube, earth; to the octahedron, air; to the dodecahedron, water; and lastly to the icosahedron he gave the *cosmos*, believing that the icosahedron must be the basic constituent of the stars and the planets. There is a geometrical rule at work here, which limits the number of forms available, i.e. five. Such a proposition is comforting. There is a limit, a known limit, and there are understandable and explicable mathematical explanations for why it is so.

It is difficult to separate out the other propositions which Plato espoused for they interweave and depend upon each other. However, if the body is taken as the common feature there appears a thread which can be followed. In *Ion*, another of his works, Plato

considered poets to be working out of a form of divine madness which he called *katokoche*, in essence a form of possession by the Muses: ⁴⁹

All good epic poets produce all their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. So too with good lyric poets ... so the lyric poets compose ... when they are not in their right mind (5)

Katokoche frightened Plato. It ran counter to his ideal of the rationally ordered society he desired. Moreover, not only were the poems constructed by poets who were ‘out of their minds’, so that their bodies were without a controlling influence, but the listener to such work was also susceptible. Plato was laying down the foundations for the notion of the link between creativity and mental illness. His was an early model of the mad poet/creator. The solution he proposed in *Republic* must be to control the poets and their work:

‘Next we have to discuss the procedure for singing and music,’ I said. Evidently.

‘Well, what we have to say about them – about which types are permitted – if we are to be consistent with what has already been said, must by now be universally obvious surely?’

‘And the music and the rhythm must be in keeping with the words.’

‘Of course.’

‘Well, we said that laments and dirges need never be voiced.’

‘That’s right.’

‘So which are the plaintive musical modes? You must tell me – you’re the musician.’

‘The Mixed Lydian’, he replied ‘and the Taut Lydian and any others like them.’

‘We should exclude them, then,’ I said. ‘They don’t help even women achieve the required goodness, let alone men.’

‘Right.’

‘Now, it’s utterly inappropriate for our guardians to be drunk and soft and idle.’

‘Of course.’

‘Well, which modes are soft and suitable for drinking parties?’

‘There’s an Ionian mode which is called “loose”,’ he answered, ‘and another Lydian one as well.’

‘Can you find any use for them, Glaucon, when you’re dealing with military men?’

‘None at all he replied.’ ‘It looks as though you’re left with the Dorian and Phrygian modes.’

‘I’m no expert on the modes,’ I said, ‘but please leave me with a mode which properly captures the tones and variations of pitch of a brave man’s voice during battle or any other enterprise he’d rather not be involved in – the voice of a man who, even when he fails and faces injury or death or some other catastrophe, still resists fortune in a disciplined and resolute manner. And leave me another mode which captures his voice when he’s engaged in peaceful enterprises, where there is no lack of will and he can choose what to do (95)⁵⁰

And he concludes:

All right, then, let’s finish the purging. We should discuss rhythm next, after music, and make sure we avoid chasing after complexity of rhythm and a wide variety of tempos. We should try to discern the rhythms of a life which is well regulated and courageous. When we’ve done so, we’ll force the metre and the tune to conform to the words which express such a life, rather than forcing the words to conform to the metre and the tune. (97)

It does not seem to have occurred to Plato, certainly not in quite the same way as it might to modern thinkers perhaps, that what he was advocating was censorship. He believed passionately in the ideal he had for mankind and felt that the means of achieving such an end were therefore entirely justified. What is also clear is that Plato is admitting, though not openly, that poetry is effective, that it has power. Why else would he be so concerned to limit it in terms of both content and form? - because he is afraid of it and what it might do to his image of the world. He is acknowledging mankind’s susceptibility in the face of a creative piece of work.⁵¹ Already, in the section of *Republic* just quoted, we see an admission that certain modes are ‘suitable for drinking-parties’. Plato explains the dangers of exposure to the images created by the artists, whilst himself employing imagery:

Otherwise, during their upbringing our guardians will be surrounded by the pernicious pasturage of images of badness, which will be so common that they’ll often be nibbling and feeding on them, day in and day out, a little at a time, until without realizing it they’ll amass badness in their minds. [99]

Finally we see the real basis for Plato's fear of poetry revealed when he is speaking about Homer:

We'll implore Homer and the rest of the poets not to get cross if we strike these and all similar lines from their work [These were lines which Plato felt were dangerous because they did not adhere to his vision of God as the source of all goodness]. We'll explain that it's not because the lines are not good poetry and don't give pleasure to most people; on the contrary, the better poetry they are, the more they are to be kept from the ears of children and men....

'Absolutely'.

'Now, we'd better get rid of all frightening and terrifying names which crop up here. I mean names like Cocytus and Styx, ghost and wraith, and so on – all the names which are designed to make everyone who hears them shudder. In another context, they may have a useful purpose to serve; but our worry is that this shivering might make our guardians too feverish and enervated.'

'It's a legitimate worry,' he remarked.

'Should we ban them, then?'

'Yes.' (80) ⁵²

A discussion might well proceed from here as to how, throughout history, regimes have sought to censor the poets and artists for political or other social or economic reasons. Such an exploration is outside the immediate point of enquiry but by looking at what Plato had to say it is possible to discern the threads of the debate, which, to a large degree, remain unaltered. Poetry, and by extension the arts, are dangerous because they have the capacity to influence people. Whether Plato was the first to suggest that the reader/listener can become, like the maker, to some degree or other possessed, it is certain he was afraid that this was the case. This thesis, beginning with the clear effect of the Heaney episode, argues, not only that such a dynamic does occur, but that the body, in particular the senses, is the vehicle by which the transmission takes place.

The form in which the artists choose to express their respective arts is also important because different forms bring about different effects. More specifically poetry is 'a legitimate worry' because it can actually bring about changes to the body itself, fever and enervation being only two examples offered by Plato. The body of both writer

and reader/listener are prone to influence. The poet becomes possessed and writes out of this agitated state [*katokoche*] and the listeners shudder and shiver, becoming fevered themselves.⁵³

Earlier, I described my reaction to the Heaney poem as ‘involuntary, primitive and ineffable’. Certainly I did not choose consciously for my body to react in the way that it did. Such an involuntary bodily response now has a theoretical explanation drawn from neuroscience. The limbic system, consisting of the hypothalamus, the hippocampus and the amygdala, is responsible for, among other things, the autonomic nervous system (ANS). From work carried out in the field of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) it is argued that there are times when the limbic system malfunctions and the ANS is not efficiently regulated. Working properly the limbic system makes use of the Hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis when the body is under threat. In short, the body is told, by the secretion of epinephrine and norepinephrine to mobilize either for fight or flight. After the perceived threat is over, the adrenal glands, release a hydrocortizone, cortisol, which halts the alarm reaction and the body returns to normal. What happens to those who suffer from PTSD is that the adrenal glands do not produce the cortisol, or do not produce sufficient cortisol, and the body, instead of settling back to normal, goes on in a state of hyperarousal of the ANS. Research has not, as yet, been able to prove that the ‘freezing’ reaction, known as tonic immobility, which is suffered by some victims of trauma is also linked to a malfunction in the HPA axis. However, it is accepted that all three responses, fight, flight or freezing are automatic. Babette Rothschild in *The Body Remembers* describes them as ‘similar to reflexes in that they are instantaneous’ and that ‘they are not chosen by thoughtful consideration’. (9,11)⁵⁴

My reaction to Heaney was in no way traumatic, but reading the description of how the body can respond both instantaneously and automatically to an external stimulus

certainly offers a scientifically based analogy, if not an explanation. The discussion of the fight or flight response also reverberates with my choice of the word primitive, for it suggests a response which has been available to humans for as long as they have needed to respond to threat.⁵⁵ With regard to the choice of the word ‘ineffable’, PTSD research also corroborates this selection. Bessel van der Kolk, Professor of Psychiatry at Boston University Medical School, attributes what he calls the ‘speechless terror’ to a suppression of Broca’s area, the left cortical structure of the brain responsible for language, whilst the body is undergoing stress or trauma.⁵⁶ At such moments language is unavailable. All that is possible is a ‘wow’ or a ‘yes’, simple sounds which stand in the gap, whilst language has yet to be mobilized in its full form.

Plato was right to be concerned about language. If, by analogy with PTSD, something happens, phenomenologically, to the body when it receives language, and it reacts with a hyperarousal of the ANS, then what is taking place is beyond control. We have seen such responses are automatic and instantaneous. Rothschild, describing a patient who suffered from a phobia of dogs, points out that although he knew not all dogs were out to attack him, ‘all of his rational thoughts appeared to have no effect on his nervous system’. (4). That our rational self is not always able to control our responses would have posed a serious threat to Plato’s hopes of a rationally ordered society.

There are other neuro-scientific considerations which arise from research into memory. In the last twenty to thirty years multiple memory systems have been acknowledged, in particular the division into explicit or declarative memory, and implicit or nondeclarative memory. Rothschild characterizes the categories: explicit memory is conscious, handling information which is: cognitive, factual, verbal/semantic, operative, procedural. It is governed by the hippocampus, it matures at about the age of three and carries out the construction of narrative. On the other hand implicit memory is under the

influence of the amygdala, is unconscious, matures from birth and is speechless. It deals with information which is: emotional, conditioning, body, sensory, and autonomic.

These distinct types of memory will have implications for this thesis, especially when considering the ideas of how we come to know ‘without knowing’, and what we bring with us from birth, as Wordsworth says ‘not in entire forgetfulness’. The ubiquity of the body in the process of creativity will dominate this thesis. I would like to examine in the next chapters some implications of this dynamic: the role of the senses, the importance of the unconscious, the notion of reverberation and the evolution of the psyche.

Chapter Three

‘Decoding Thunder’

Over and over again, this thesis proposes that the body is deeply implicated in the process of creativity. Not only in the state of the body of the maker, but thereafter in the body of the listener or reader. This short chapter sets out to explore, in more detail, some of the ways in which the body performs when involved in creativity. Much of this performance relates to the senses. Poets are described, sometimes accused, of being sensitive souls. Whether the description is apt or not, it is nevertheless interesting to explore the idea. What has sensitivity to do with being a poet?

The OED tells us at some length that ‘sense’ has three main divisions and that within these classifications there are some twenty-five or so distinct meanings to be found. The main categories are: faculty of perception or sensation; actual perception or feeling; meaning, signification. We are concerned here primarily with the first, and the OED goes on to tell us that: ‘Each of the special faculties, is connected with a bodily organ, by which man and other animals perceive external objects and changes in the condition of their own bodies’. (1939) So do poets possess better noses, better eyes, better ears and so on than ordinary mortals? It seems unlikely, and yet Spender, a poet himself, seems to think there is something in the idea of the poet having enhanced sensitivity. For him however, it relates to how poets remember:

Memory exercised in a particular way is the natural gift of poetic genius. The poet, above all else, is a person who never forgets certain sense impressions which he has experienced and which he can re-live again and again as though with all their original freshness. (CY 70) ⁵⁷

Here a passage from *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer comes to mind, where he too deals with memory and the senses:

Touch, taste, sight, smell, hearing ... memory. While Gentiles experience and process the world through the traditional senses and use memory only as a second-order means of interpreting events, for Jews memory is no less primary than the prick of a pin, or its silver glimmer, or the taste of blood as it pulls from the finger. The Jew is pricked by a pin and remembers other pins. It is only by tracing the pinprick back to other pinpricks—when his mother tried to fix his sleeve while his arm was still in it, when his grandfather's fingers fell asleep from stroking his great grandfather's damp forehead, when Abraham tested the knife point to be sure Isaac would feel no pain—that the Jew is able to know why it hurts. When a Jew encounters a pin, he asks: What does it remember like?' (198) ⁵⁸

Foer employs generalizations which are problematic, but the passage remains valid for our purposes when applied to question of the senses. Talking of poets' sensitivity to criticism, Spender asks 'why are writers so sensitive to criticism? Partly because it is their business to be sensitive, and they are sensitive about this as other things'. (CY 76)

Sensitivity has to do with the body. If poets and other artists do indeed possess enhanced sensitivity, it is because their bodies work in such a way that they seem particularly attuned to that faculty of feeling we call sensitivity. It is as well that the OED specifically contrasts sensitivity of this kind from any exercise of will or intellect. This is body-work, not the work of the mind or of conscious choice. The body will precede the mind and the will. If poets and other makers are gifted in their sensitivity it is the work of their bodies which gets them there first, long before any body of work, as we use that term, comes into existence. Carlos Fuentes, the Mexican man of letters, described his own son Lemus, a painter, in these words, 'he seemed to understand that the image resists reductive definition and encompasses in a manner that is almost an act of love, all the senses ... sight sound smell taste'. ⁵⁹

Some poets have specifically mentioned the role of the body and the senses in relation to poetry. In *Strong Words* many of the articles written by writers contain such

references. Wallace Stevens is very brief, 'the body is the great poem', (SW 62) and alerts us to the role played by the receiving body, 'one reads poetry with one's nerves'. (SW 59) These assertions are not expanded upon and whilst they are interesting snippets others have been more forthcoming. Hugh MacDiarmid, in exploring the importance of the 'Vernacular' to Scottish literature, says, 'and one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Vernacular, part of its very essence, is its insistent recognition of the body, the senses'. (SW 76) Two contemporaries of MacDiarmid, Pound and Bunting, are clear that the senses are a vital component in the making and receiving of poetry. For both the ear is crucial, the faculty of hearing is central. Pound observes:

There is, however, in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base.
(SW 21)

In *Briggflatts*, Bunting treats us to a telling passage of how he sees the apprentice poet using his senses:

Secret, solitary, a spy, he gauges
Lines of a Flemish horse
Hauling beer, the angle, obtuse,
A slut's blouse draws on her chest,
Counts beat against beat, bus conductor
Against engine against wheels against
The pedal, Tottenham Court Road, decodes
Thunder, scans
Porridge bubbling, pipes clanking, feels
Buddha's basalt cheek⁶⁰

Eye, ear and hand; sight, hearing and touch, the senses working to make 'sense' of what they see, hear and touch in terms of its poetic potential. After this it comes as no surprise when we hear Bunting, in prose, explaining what for him, is the crux of poetry:

Poetry, like music, is to be heard. It deals in sound---long sounds and short sounds, heavy beats and light beats, the tone relations of vowels, the relations of consonants to one another which are like instrumental colour in music. Poetry lies dead on the page, until some voice brings it to life, just as music, on the stave, is no more than instructions to the player. A skilled musician can imagine the sound, more or less, and a skilled reader

can try to hear, mentally, what his eyes see in print: but nothing will satisfy either of them till his ears hear it as real sound in the air. Poetry must be read aloud .. Poetry is seeking to make not meaning but beauty; or if you insist on misusing words, its “meaning” is of another kind, and lies in the relation to one another of lines and patterns of sound, perhaps harmonious, perhaps contrasting and clashing, which the hearer feels rather than understands, lines of sound drawn in the air which stir deep emotions which have not even a name in prose. This needs no explaining to an audience which gets its poetry by ear. (SW 80) ⁶¹

Does Bunting’s phrase, ‘which the hearer feels rather than understands’, help me to engage again with the reading in Edinburgh? Was my body feeling the poem or image being read, through the senses, in a way which preceded any attempt at meaning other than ““meaning” of another kind”? Perhaps this is the same notion that Keats refers to when he asks us to consider that we must test on the pulse in order to be sure. This is Pound’s ‘organ-base’ against which we can register what we hear.⁶² When Bunting was carrying out final amendments to *Briggflatts*, he would work into the early hours of the morning and then from his study would come the sound of him playing the recorder. He was testing what he had just written, checking whether his commitment to the sonata form was appropriate for the poem. For this he would need to use his breath, to cast it through the instrument, to gauge the lines, not this time of the horse, but of the music of the poem. It is tempting to play with the idea of the re-corder here. Was Bunting using his instrument to play back the chords he could hear in his poem, is this reverberation in another form? It is hard, maybe it is impossible to say, when music and words reverberate in this way, whether one comes first or not. Was Bunting following the sonata or did his playing merely offer the possibility of corroborating the form which was checked and rechecked, during those late night recorder sessions, against the words which he had written?

Les Murray in a wonderful line and a half tells us what it is he feels is required of the body, when it comes to the experience of poetry, ‘among the feral stanzas are many

that demand your flesh to embody themselves'. (SW 202) The tone of these words reminds us, just in case we were inclined to side-step the issue, that poetry is wild, demanding, and inexorably, to do with our body. Murray would have us give over our flesh to 'feral stanzas'. The phrase is paradoxical. A stanza is a formed, made entity, intended to have structure and integrity and yet he tells us that it is wild, more precisely, if we follow the meaning of feral, 'run wild' or 'gone wild'. This is even more disturbing, connoting as it does the idea that something that potentially was once under control has gone wild, brutal and savage. Feral also carries the meaning of funereal, deadly or fatal. Our flesh is required to embody that which is potentially fatal. Our flesh may be unconsciously aware of this, but it is awful to be reminded. We cannot leave the body without pursuing for a moment the implications of Keats's 'pulse'. Pound reminds us:

I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use "symbols" he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude [thrust forward or push out]; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance. A hawk is a hawk. (SW 22)

When Keats employs the word pulse[s], we are alerted to its symbolic function, but it does not obtrude.⁶³ We make of it what we will. However we are immediately involved with the body. We become intimate with the heart, blood and arteries and our sense of touch when we feel on the surface of the body for the beating evidence of the internal rhythm. The pulse is the most basic indicator of health and even life itself. It is for the pulse we seek when we search for evidence of continuing existence. It denotes life. It is vital, energetic and slips easily from its purely physical manifestation into the figurative; a racing pulse can be evidence of love or of fear.

What we also know is that the pulse rate varies. So various beats are experienced by our bodies and can be used to test the beats we experience from outside. Bunting,

attempting to decode his thunder or scan his porridge, is using, albeit unconsciously, that most basic of all registers, his pulse. We also know that when Keats talks of our pulses, we hear not only our own bodily beats, but also the world's pulse, in the sense that we know on some level that all matter, like pulsars, emits pulses. Tony Harrison, when asked why he felt writing drama in verse form was more effective than prose, answered: 'verse crosses distance'.⁶⁴ As though words have the energy to pulse, to send a signal at regular intervals, we become receivers when we listen to verse. Furthermore we are affected by the reception. Seamus Heaney in an article in *The Guardian* in 1995 was asked to outline what poetry meant to him. He argued that poetry, 'has to be a working model of inclusive consciousness', and went on to expand:

As long as the coordinates of the imagined thing correspond to those of the world that we live in and endure, poetry is fulfilling its counterweighting function.⁶⁵

Heaney quotes Jorge Luis Borges who asserts, "The taste of the apple (states Berkeley) lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself; in a similar way (I would say) poetry lies in the meeting of poem and reader, not in the lines of symbols printed on pages of a book. What is essential is ... the thrill, the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading". I would suggest that rather than an **almost** physical emotion we actually experience a very real and concrete physical response when we read some poetry. Heaney, in the same article, writes:

I want to profess the surprise of poetry as well as its reliability; I want to celebrate its given, unforeseeable thereness, the way it enters our field of vision and animates our physical and intelligent being...

Heaney distinguishes between the physical and mental, and notices that poetry affects both. My assertion is that this is true, but that in the first instance, if only by a short head, [it took a reader to point out to me the unintended pun here] the body receives the poem

before the intellect.⁶⁶ Most likely both mind and body are engaged simultaneously but often the role of the body is overlooked in favour of the mind, whilst I suggest it has a claim for the preeminent position. Today in some early morning reading, I came across Heaney again, this time with his poem *A Constable Calls*. For the rest of the day I have heard the ticking of the bicycle as the constable leaves. The general mood of the poem struck me as disconcerting but the main effect was the sound generated by the last line:

And the bicycle ticked, ticked, ticked.⁶⁷

This line is cleverly weighted against the opening line, which sets up an expectation of something more lighthearted, as it begins the poem with an easy rhythm:

His bicycle stood at the window-sill

We are left with something ticking, like a bomb. We are animated, waiting to see if something will happen. Although the poem has ended, its impact goes on and on. Heaney has given us his version of the pulse in this line. This is his beat and although we may sense it fading into the distance, it has left its trace in us. We are alerted, animated, to use Heaney's own word, and we know that something is different from the moment before we read the poem. This registration is made by our body as much as our mind as we struggle to engage with how we have been affected by this ticking. How do we cope with this somatic memory? For me it is as if something is ticking inside of me as I carry this image through the day. I have 'taken in' the image, to some extent as a mental concept, no doubt achieved some initial understanding even, but mostly it feels like a bodily absorption, an incorporation. The initial sense that is made of the poem is a bodily sense.

Louis Zukofsky, pays close attention to the intellectual properties of language. Nonetheless, he is fascinating in his analysis of the part played by the body, in particular

the senses. In *A Statement for Poetry* he suggests that the *means* and *objects* of poetry have been constant since about 3000BC:

The Means of Poetry; *Words* – consisting of *syllables*, in turn made up of *phones* that are denoted by *letters* that were once graphic symbols or pictures. Words grow out of effects of:

- A Sight, touch, taste, smell
- B Hearing
- C Thoughts with respect to other words, the interplay
 of concepts (SW 89)

He makes a clear statement that words are primarily grown from the effects of our five faculties of sense. Intriguingly he does not explain why he does not link hearing with the other senses, but it is obvious that he feels that the senses precede the intellect in the way in which he orders his list.⁶⁸ In the same article he corroborates the observations we have already heard from others about the rhythm and pulse:

But what specifically is good poetry? It is precise information on existence out of which it grows, and information of its own existence, that is, the movement (and tone) of words. Rhythm, pulse, keeping time with existence, is the distinction of its technique. (SW 88)

Mark Ford, celebrating the career of the poet Lee Harwood said of him:

Harwood's lyrics tend to strike the reader as 'felt in the blood, and felt along the heart' to borrow a phrase from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"
⁶⁹

Bunting's attempt to decode thunder can be seen as an example of what Flannery O'Connor has termed 'the habit of art':

Art is the habit of the artist; and habits have to be rooted deep in the whole personality. They have to be cultivated like any other habit, over a long period of time, by experience; and teaching any kind of writing is largely a matter of helping the student develop the habit of art. I think this is more than just a discipline, although it is that; I think it is a way of looking at the created world and of using the senses so as to make them find as much meaning as possible in things. (qtd. in Samson, 63)

Poets do not possess better or more acute senses than others, but they recognize the need to train their senses, to work at enhancing their sensual faculties, so that they can make sense of what they encounter in the world around them.⁷⁰ No doubt good poems make meaning, but more importantly they must, concurrently, make good sense. Again we are alerted to the slippage in the meaning of the word sense here and the contrast between the felt sense, that capacity of the body to understand and appreciate, and the mental faculty of understanding. The contrast is beautifully handled in a poem by Jean Mambrino, entitled appropriately, *Sense*:

Rain refreshes the shadows,
makes the points of the leaves glitter,
as the sun threads its way
between the drops. Earth perfumes itself
afresh, takes on the colour
of the gilded sunset.
Catch this moment to offer it,
consecrate it. For the mind
effaces scents from memory,
which reflects only the meaning
of what was offered to you,
the prayer of what is over.

Translated by Kathleen Raine.⁷¹

Chapter Four

Down The Far Wires.

In previous chapters mention has been made of poetry's potential to return the reader/listener to an earlier time or place. Recalling the question posed earlier by Jaynes, there are implications which arise from this proposition and which extend beyond what we usually understand by memory:

And why does poetry flash with recognitions of thoughts we did not know we had, finding its unsure way to something in us that knows and has known all the time, something, I think, older than the present organization of our nature? (361)

What does Jaynes mean by the phrase, 'older than the present organization of our nature'? This chapter sets out to explore whether poetry is able to fulfill this claim of being able to take us back; further, if it can, how does it achieve this feat, and finally, what is it that we experience when making the return?

Gaston Bachelard believes poetry can achieve this return and in *The Poetics of Space* he suggests a dynamic process by which the return is achieved, which he calls the 'reverberations of a single poetic image':

By its novelty, a poetic image sets in motion the entire linguistic mechanism. The poetic image places us at the origin of the speaking being. (xxiii)

Bachelard's two propositions, if sustainable, contain important implications.

When we encounter any word beginning with 're', we automatically register an echo; we are alerted to something which has gone before; we are in the realm of 'back' or 'again'. Reverberation means: 'the action of driving or sending back, reflecting light, returning a sound etc, the fact of being reflected, returned etc' (*OED* 3) The light, the

sound, already exist before reverberation causes them to be reflected or resounded. The word 'reverberatory' is used of fire especially, and in particular, of the reverberatory furnace, which is so constructed that the flame is forced back upon the substance exposed to it. So also with the poetic image, we are forced, via the process of reverberation, back upon the image itself.⁷² So far back Bachelard suggests, that we find ourselves at the origin, at the beginning of language and 'the origin of the speaking being'. Although reverberation is a noun, we are alerted to the action, the activity, the fact that what is involved is a dynamic process. Bachelard is exploring, teasing out, a 'how' question. His question is: 'How come the poetic image works, and in turn, how does this help us to understand how poetry works?'

Don Paterson, in his 2004 'T.S. Eliot' lecture, *The Dark Art Of Poetry*, corroborates Bachelard, although his trajectory differs. Paterson hints at where he is going when he tells us that:

Since for a reader to be astonished by the original phrase *it must already be partly familiar to them* [italics original] (3)⁷³

Already we begin to sense the reverberation, we are going back, back to something, somewhere, previous. The paradox is well set out by Paterson, the phrase is both original and known all at once. In an essay entitled *Enter Stage Left*, David Hare makes a similar point about being taken back by his education at Lancing College and discovering the familiar, or already known:

Inspired teachers pushed my horizons further and further back. I was ready. Culture began to act on me exactly as it is meant to, giving me access to some way of experiencing and interpreting that play between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the similar and the different which is at the heart of all great artistic experience. Put it this way: you know it and you don't. (4)

Paterson is a follower of the Post-Freudian theorist Ignacio Matte Blanco, who, according to Paterson, held the following idea:

When we were born, everything was pretty much everything else. The breast was you, your mother the breast, and the back garden your mother, the world was an absolute and indivisible unity. There was nothing to tell you otherwise. This perception is atemporal, since the perception of the *passing* of time is dependent first on the perception of difference, of an asymmetrical and consecutive series of events, which we did not then know.

This sense of unity was gradually overlayed with the perception of discrete, causally successive and asymmetrical things and events. With the acquisition of language, this now goes into overdrive. Now here's the important part; this new perception does *not* refute the observations of the first, but is necessary accommodation of the fact of our consciousness. That is to say in the fall into language, asymmetry, the observation that we are other than the breast, the mother and the back garden, the moon, the sea, does *not* occur at the expense of that first knowledge, of everything as everything else, of a unity; this continues running, mostly under the limen of our consciousness, as a kind of spiritual DOS programme. Why? Because it was *true*. (5-6)

Paterson highlights that the overlay which differentiation through language offers us, is not achieved at the expense of 'that first knowledge' which continues, in his view, 'under the limen of our consciousness'. It is intriguing to recall that limen does not just mean threshold, but for psychologists has a particular forensic meaning: 'The limit below which a given stimulus ceases to be perceptible; the minimum amount of nerve-excitation required to produce a sensation'. (*OED*). Paterson and Bachelard are suggesting that the poetic image has the capacity to take us [back] across the threshold, over the limen, and into that state which we might characterize as either the unconscious, or that earlier undifferentiated state of 'oneness' which Paterson describes. The poetic image is able to generate just sufficient 'nerve-excitation' to produce a sensation. If this is correct then once again the body is deeply implicated in the process. The image, operates upon the nerves to produce excitation and thence sensation. Is this a satisfactory explanation of what occurred to me when listening to Heaney read in Edinburgh? That one particular image was able to excite sufficient nerve activity for my body to register a strong visceral

sensation. I described the feeling/sensation as being primitive, in the sense of early. Also the sensation preceded any verbal response I might have had to the work.⁷⁴

Writing about how the objects of before are regained by the use of the image Paterson tells us:

Then we awaken a little to the realm of the symmetries again, and of no time, of eternity. And when the things of the world that we have contemplated in this wordless silence reenter the world of discrete concept, of speech and language---they return as strangers; and then they declare wholly unexpected allegiance, reveal wholly unexpected valencies. We see the nerve in the bare tree; we hear the applause in the rain. These things are, in other words, redreamt, reimagined, remade. This I think is the deepest meaning of our etymology as *maker*. [6]

In this passage, Paterson uses 're' words as follows; reclaim, reassume, repossess, reenter, return, reveal, redreamt, reimagined, remade. And we do not forget either the use of 'again' as we re-awaken to what he calls the realm of the symmetries. Paterson is alerting us to the deep paradox which lies at the heart of the function of the poet as maker:

Poetry then, remystifies, allows the Edenic view to be made briefly conscious—and reentered via the most perverse (but perhaps only) tool for the job: language. Poetry is the paradox of language turned against its own declared purpose, that of nailing down the human dream. Poets are therefore experts in the failure of language. Words fail us continually as we search for them beyond the borders of speech, or drive them to the limit of their meaning and then beyond it. (7)⁷⁵

The colour photograph taken by David Stilitoe, which accompanies an abridged version of Paterson's lecture, and which appears in the Guardian Review for 6/11/04, is a portrait of Paterson taken with him standing in a corner against a wall which appears to be made of mirror glass. So there are two images. The one on the left is sharp and in focus, his clear gray/blue eyes look back directly at the reader. The reflected image on the right is angled slightly away so the eyes are looking elsewhere, past the reader as though fixed

upon another time and place, perhaps a before time, perhaps to the realm of the symmetries. It is a poignant depiction of the poet as maker and echoes Addison's phrase:

Like the several Reverberations of the same Image from two opposite
Looking-Glasses. (*OED1a*)

Bachelard and Paterson want us to see that whilst effective poetic images are original, nevertheless they come trailing with them traces, a glimpse of the Edenic, before we learned to differentiate by the use of language itself. Furthermore that trail, that glimpse is one we recognize however faintly for we carry it also inside of ourselves. This is the source of the idea that we know things without being fully conscious that we know them.

Wordsworth must have had some sort of notion such as this when he wrote:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood. V.' (460) ⁷⁶

We do not need to share his religious fervour to appreciate the belief that we already know something upon our arrival. His lovely phrase, 'not in entire forgetfulness' is his way of saying that we do not incarnate as blank slates but with some 'knowledge'. For Paterson this is the unconscious awareness of the atemporal time of 'before', for Bachelard this is the 'origin of the speaking being', that is the threshold of language/before language. From a Jungian perspective such an internal 'memory', would be an archetype or a manifestation of the collective unconscious. For another psychological theorist it may be seen as the original object, the breast for example, from which we are weaned, but from which we never fully differentiate and to some extent

always relate. For others it will be the distinction between the instinctual/implicit memory, which is matured at birth, and the explicit memory, which takes time to develop. For our present purpose the individual theory chosen does not really matter; what is intriguing is the notion which lies beneath, and which is common to so many approaches, though the words may differ. The maker when engaged in the process of poesis, when he or she is making, is dealing with two worlds simultaneously, the one world of the here and now, full of differentiated objects, separate from one another, possessing names of their own, defined by language, and the other world of before, when symmetry refused to recognize this from that, when all was one.

Paterson, though he pretends the secret is arcane, tells us it is already out ‘in the public domain [so] you might as well hear it. In Scots it’s *twa-in-yin*; two-in-one.’ Just in case we are in any doubt whatsoever he goes on:

Or to put it with mind-numbing dullness: the process of the poem is that of a single unifying *new* idea being driven through the productive resistance of the form proposed by the marriage of two previously estranged or unrelated things. (7)

Before examining how this making, this driving through, might be achieved, it is worth noting that reverberation is a process which involves movement. In its simplest form it goes like this. A sound or a light is produced and moves away from its source until it encounters a surface or resistance which turns it back again in the form of an echo or reflection. The echo or the reflection can be heard or seen but in the meantime something has happened. When Byron writes, ‘the shock, the shout, the groan of war Reverberated along that vale’, he is telling us two things. (*OED* “reverberate” 7). First, what we hear in the echo is not the original shock or shout or groan but some other version which has been affected by its passage both through time and space. Reverberation goes beyond the simple mechanics of an echo or a reflection; it considers what occurs when the echo or the reflection is received back by the watcher or the

listener. Second, the process of reverberation is ongoing. It is not so much a single shout sent to a wall to be returned as single echo, but, continuing with the metaphor of warfare, more a series of originating sights and sounds, almost certainly varying in their intensity which are being reverberated at the same time as each other, interpenetrating each other to produce an overall impact. Paterson is intriguing in offering to us the notion of the two in one, but by so doing he limits himself at the same time. The danger appears to be the idea that reverberation involves some sense of duality or opposition and that what is being engendered in the process is to try and find a third position, that of unity, arising out of that tension. I suggest that whilst this notion is valid it is also naïve.

Byron's 'shock, shout and groan', is a simple enough list of three of the reverberations of war, but it offers us the insight that, rather than a duality, we might have to entertain something more complex. Nor is this a matter of simply counting up the number of aspects and extending the list from two to three or four or five. It is more the growing realization that even from a single image the process which is initiated goes beyond a tension between one thing and another, between here and there, now and then, this and that, high and low, inside and out, but opens out into possibilities, which if not infinite, are certainly ongoing and interpenetrative.⁷⁷ This complexity, which arises from the exploration of reverberation, is a reminder of the modern view of the neuroscientists about the multi-layered systems at work in the brain. How these systems overlap and interpenetrate, how they reverberate with one another has emerged as the leading question.

As a point of departure, which might take us further into the implications of reverberation, let us take a poem in which the poet chooses to use that very word itself.⁷⁸

In 'Aran', Derek Mahon writes:

He is earthed to his girl, one hand fastened

In hers, and with his free hand listens,
An earphone, to his own rendition
Singing darkness into the light.
I close the pub door gently and step out
Into the yard and the song goes out
And a gull creaks off from the tin roof
Of an outhouse, planing over the ocean,
Circling now with a hoarse inchoate
Screaming the boned fields of its vision.
God, that was the way to do it,
Hand-clapping, echo-prolonging poet!

Scorched with a fearful admiration,
Walking over the nacreous sand,
I dream myself to that tradition
Generations off the land—
One hand to an ear for the vibration,
The far wires, the reverberation
Down light-years of the imagination
And a loved hand in the other hand.

The long glow springs from the dark soil, however—
No marsh-light holds a candle to this;
Unearthly still in its white weather
A crack-voiced rock-marauder, scavenger, fierce
Friend to no slant fields or the sea either,
Folds back over the forming waters.

Mahon provides several opportunities to explore what may be inherent in the notion of reverberation. There are clear examples of dualistic oppositions which set up tensions: being earthed/flying; fastened/free; darkness/light; sound/silence; sea/land; here/there; now/then. What is also clear is that all such images are operating at the same time. No image in a poem is read and discarded by the reader but remains to be reheard, perhaps in a slightly different form, perhaps as a straightforward repetition. So for example, the word 'earthed' is revisited as: yard, fields, sand, land, soil, unearthly and fields again. Each time we experience a re-presentation of the earth or the land we allow the angle offered by the poet to affect our response to the poem as a whole. We shift as he shifts, trying through the variations he offers, to locate the central notion of what the land is, and

what it might mean at different times. We can begin to see in this poem, as indeed we might with so many good poems, that what is going on is more than the operation of a single atomic image, although that is happening too. Bachelard may well be right when he asserts that a single image is capable of reverberation but when a poem is made the overall result is more than the effect created by any single image. As one image is reverberating so it is joined by another, which in turn reverberates only to be joined by others and so on. Then reverberation likens itself to concatenation, as the links of the chain build together.

We can then see why such phrases as ‘echo-prolonging poet’, ‘the far wires’ and ‘folds back’ carry such potency in this poem.⁷⁹ Mahon seems well aware that although he is writing of a particular incident, which takes place in a specific place and time, he is nevertheless linked, inescapably, to other things in other times. He uses the idea of the far wires as a communication to the past. He has established the beat early in the poem with the song and the hand clapping, but at another level he is aware of subtler but no less significant pulses, which he introduces as vibration, then goes to reverberation, and hence to imagination. These three words vibration, reverberation and imagination end three consecutive lines and we cannot escape the connection made by the rhyme but nor can we forget that in the same stanza we have already heard admiration and tradition. No less can we avoid the simple beat of the rhymes: sand, land and hand, which lie between the other lines. Mahon is also using this middle stanza as a counterpoint to the first and third. In them he is engaged with the event and the protagonists taking part in the event, the places, the people, the gull, the sounds etc. In the middle stanza he enters another world and he gets there by dreaming. The dreaming may be day-dreaming or some chosen reverie, trance or enchantment but it has the effect of allowing him (and us) to drift away. What this shift does is to raise for us the whole question of the role of the unconscious.

One of the ways in which reverberation operates is to move to and fro between different states of mind. We could state this blandly as a binary opposition or contrast between the conscious mind and the unconscious, but such simplicity does nothing to help when we know that the mind is infinitely more subtle and complex than this. Before going further with this enquiry we need to note the precise phrase which Mahon uses when approaching this other mind state. He says 'I dreamed myself to'. Intriguingly, he does not say, I dreamed a dream which took me to, but that he dreamed himself to. Such use of the verb, dream, in a self-reflexive form, appears paradoxical. Conventional wisdom would have us believe that we cannot simply dream when we choose but that the unconscious, will, in its own time, using its own other logic, offer us a dream when it considers it be appropriate. However, we realize that such a statement is too naïve. We might take up Mahon's phrase and fold back here to what was said earlier by Paterson about the limen of consciousness.

Paterson suggested that the old knowledge was not sacrificed when language offered us the chance to differentiate but went on 'mostly under the limen of consciousness'. We also noted that for psychologists this word limen had a specific meaning. Whilst we might find it attractive to make a division between say: the unconscious and the conscious, or between here and there, or between now and then, the truth is that we are confronted with the fact that rather than being divided these apparent opposites are operating concurrently, and reverberating with each other.

An example from recent research in medical science is instructive. It is now accepted that the enteric nervous system, which is situated in the digestive tract, the gut, is very similar in many ways to the brain. So alike that the phrase 'gut brain' is now in common usage. It is known that the two systems, the brain and the gut brain develop from the same source in the embryo known as the neural crest. Before they were

separated they shared a common origin. Michael Gershon, Professor of Anatomy at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, New York is considered to be one of the leading authorities on the gut brain and says:

The brain in the head deals with the finer things, religion poetry, philosophy, God help us, politics, while the brain in the gut deals with the messy dirty disgusting business of digestion.

This simple distinction which Gershon made by way of explanation to a Radio Four audience does not do full justice to the gut brain.⁸⁰ There is increasing awareness that the gut is a source of emotional experience and that the phrase 'gut feeling' has come to have a new significance.

Another commentator, Anton Emanuel, Gastro-Enterologist, at St Mary's Hospital, London, on the same programme, which was entitled, 'Gut Reactions', observed :

I have in my time seen patients who are like diviners in medieval times, who would feel certain things genuinely in their gut, there are some people whose way of expressing life's emotions is primarily intestinal.

What is more, it is clear that there is a connection between the gut brain and the head brain and that the communication between them is two way. In fact, of the information which passes between the two, ninety per cent is thought to travel upwards and only ten per cent downwards. This interrelationship has been likened to the role of the gut brain as a microcomputer whilst the head brain acts more like a mainframe. Certainly it is believed that the head holds sway, but so sophisticated and complex is the gut brain that the presenter of the programme was obliged to observe:

Given the complexity of the brain in the gut it is intriguing to wonder why evolution chose the brain in the head to take overall command. What would it be like one wonders if the seat of our consciousness was located not in the head but in the abdomen?⁸¹

There are varying theories as to why the head brain evolved to take overall command but what is not in dispute is that gut brain forms a powerful, and to some degree independently functioning system, and that the interaction between the two is crucial.

Chantal writing in Toronto's 'The Globe and Mail', observes:

The discovery of the brain-gut connection also allowed scientists to learn what is at the heart of the most visceral human emotions. A gut feeling, for example, is not just a poetic image used to convey intuition. It arises from the interplay between our two brains.

For 'interplay', I believe, we need to read 'reverberation'. Within the body there is movement. We tend to think of certain functions as being discrete and it is tempting to make divisions in order to be able to describe what is going on. This organ functions in this way and is responsible for this work. On the other hand this organ does this job by functioning in a different way. What is left out in this type of analysis is the relationship between the parts. It is becoming clearer that more and more emphasis is being placed upon trying to find out just how this interplay really works. So when Gershon suggests that the head brain takes care of certain matters, poetry being one of them, one wonders whether he too is not guilty of slipping into a divisive analysis. If the gut is being seen as a site of emotion and there is a highway between the gut brain and the head via the vagus nerve then how can one attribute to the head brain alone the arena of poesis. It is heartening to notice that A.S.Byatt in *Unruly Times*, her book on Wordsworth and Coleridge and their time, suggests that it was Coleridge who first used the word psychosomatic. (92) The O.E.D. offers no corroboration, listing psychosomatic only in the addendum but gives 1836 for 'psychologize'; to theorize or reason psychologically.

Although the connection between psyche and the body is slightly different to that between gut brain and head brain, the parallels are interesting. Whatever we understand by the term psyche we are increasingly coming to accept that the link between it and the

body is substantial. Gershon's comment that, 'just as the brain can upset the gut, the gut can also upset the brain', could be applied to the psyche/body dynamic. (See also Sandra Blakeslee's forthcoming The Body has a Mind of its Own to be published by Random House) Moreover, for the purposes of our enquiry into reverberation we need to go even further. It is not enough to consider the various binary relationships which can be identified and say that they are examples of how reverberation can work. Although this statement may well be true, it fails to take into account the fact that as well as all these twin sets which echo within themselves, there are connections between the various sets and more than one set may be interplaying with another set at any one time. Viewed in this way the possibilities may not be infinite, but the whole question begins to appear far more complex than at first thought. Because so much activity is going on all at once it is virtually impossible to suggest a theory which allows for everything. However, this does not mean that Bachelard's thoughts about reverberation are not worthy of consideration.

Reverberation seems to offer a sensible way in which we might approach the question of how it is that the single poetic image, and by extension, the poem itself, actually works. After all, having adopted a phenomenological approach Bachelard is really only seeking to ask what is happening. What is happening when the poet attempts to make his poem and what happens when it is read, or heard read ?

Having given phenomenology prominence in this chapter it is impossible to conclude without some acknowledgement of the work of another French philosopher of the phenomenological tradition, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961).⁸² Even to try and summarise the main threads of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy would extend far beyond the scope of this thesis but some comments upon the centrality of phenomenology, the body, and perception are appropriate. The back cover description of the 2005 edition of Merleau-Ponty's major work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, credits him with using:

The example of perception to return the body to the forefront of philosophy for the first time since Plato.

Also much of his life's work was to challenge the accepted dualisms, especially that between empiricism and idealism, which he tended to refer to as intellectualism.⁸³

Because his primary source was the lived and existential body he emphasized the body's inherence in the world as being more important than reflection, which always tended to be derivative. Merleau-Ponty did not deny a place, even a significant place, to the cognitive, he just felt that it was wrong to give it a primacy over the body's experience of living in the world. So Jack Reynolds summing up the crux of Merleau-Ponty's thinking writes:

There is no relation or aspect of his phenomenology which does not implicate the body, or what he terms the body subject ... and significantly, his descriptions allow us to reconceive the problem of embodiment in terms of the body's practical capacity to act, rather than in terms of any essential trait. (2)

In terms of what has already been said about the senses and also what has been observed about the relationship of the gut brain to the head brain, Reynolds' summary is interesting:

Each of the senses informs the others in virtue of their common behavioural project, or concern with a certain human endeavour, and perception is inconceivable without this complementary functioning. (3)

Just as Bachelard warned earlier about the impossibility of the analyst attempting to investigate the poetic image successfully, Merleau-Ponty, according to Reynolds, has his own view on the inadequacies of both empiricism and intellectualism. Merleau-Ponty himself says:

In the first case consciousness is too poor, in the second too rich for any phenomenon to appeal compellingly to it. Empiricism cannot see what we need to know, what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching. (PP 280)

Merleau-Ponty's main tool for implementing his ideas is perception. It is perception which allows the body as body-subject to have a full experience of the world. So the perceiving mind becomes an incarnated body allowing the body to both think and perceive, not one or the other. So he is able to say:

Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself. (PP 407)

In essence Merleau-Ponty sees the body as the chief means of our communication with the world and that it becomes what he beautifully describes as 'our anchorage in the world' (PP 144)

Reflecting what Wilson Harris has to say about the sculptor sculpting, Reynolds quotes from another of Merleau-Ponty's works, *The Visible and the Invisible*, about the impossibility of our seeing the world as an object separate from ourselves:

Because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment, so that we may say that the things pass into us, as well as we pass into the things. (17)

If this summary offers us some insight into Merleau-Ponty's ideas, do they help us in understanding any better what is involved in creativity, particularly in the field of poetry? Merleau-Ponty does not address creativity specifically but he offers insights along the way. In the chapter, 'Sense Experience', he reiterates the general proposition already set out:

My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my comprehension. (PP 2005, 273)

and then goes on to look at words specifically:

It is my body which gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects like words. If a word is shown to a subject for too short a time for him to be able to read it, the word 'warm', for example,

induces a kind of experience of warmth which surrounds him with something in the nature of a meaningful halo. The word 'hard' produces a sort of stiffening of the back and neck, and only in a secondary way does it project itself into the visual or auditory field and assume the appearance of a sign or a word. Before becoming the indication of a concept it is first of all an event which grips my body, and this grip circumscribes the area of significance to which it has reference. (PP 2005 273-4)

Before delving into the repercussions of this passage, it might be useful to add another where Merleau-Ponty specifically refers to poetry:

The body is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art. The same is true of a poem or a novel, although they are made up of words. It is well known that a poem, though it has a superficial meaning translatable into prose, leads, in the reader's mind, [to] a further existence which makes it a poem.

Just as the spoken word is significant not only through the medium of individual words, but also through that of accent, intonation, gesture and facial expression and as these additional meanings no longer reveal the speaker's thoughts but the source of his thoughts and his fundamental manner of being, so poetry, which is perhaps accidentally narrative and in that way informative, is essentially a variety of existence. It is indistinguishable from the cry, because the cry makes use of the body as nature gave it to us: poor in expressive means; whereas the poem uses language, and even a particular language, in such a way that the existential modulation, instead of being dissipated at the very instant of its expression, finds in poetic art a means of making itself eternal. (PP 2005,174)

Taking these two passages together, the implication of what Merleau-Ponty says is that words, even in their cultural sense, are no different from any other part of the world which the body experiences. Words affect the body, they have a discernible impact. It is interesting that Plato was mentioned on the cover of *Phenomenology of Perception* because he too was aware, as already discussed, of the potential of words to affect the listener. The notion of the word as an event which can grip the body goes some way towards explaining that moment in Edinburgh when I was so affected by Heaney's words. Certainly the experience opened my awareness to the possibility that words might have some force which preceded cognition. At that point, and for a long time afterwards,

I would struggle to articulate what happened, into any kind of discernible theoretical understanding. Now having explored the experience through the years of this thesis, it appears that some kind of resolution may be in sight. Phenomenology certainly offers a viable gateway through which to enter the debate but as Merleau-Ponty himself points out the philosophy does not set out to offer solutions:

The world and reason are not problematical. We may say, if we wish, that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution', it is on the hither side of all solutions. (PP 2005, xxiii)

He goes on to echo what Coltart had to say about the impossibility of knowing what we [analysts] are doing:

It (Phenomenology) must therefore put to itself the question which it puts to all branches of knowledge, and so duplicate itself infinitely, being as Husserl says, a dialogue or infinite mediation, and, so far as it remains faithful to its intention, never knowing where it is going. The unfinished nature of phenomenology and the inchoative [in an incipient stage, rudimentary] atmosphere which has surrounded it are not to be taken as a sign of failure, they were inevitable because phenomenology's task was to reveal the mystery of the world and of reason. (PP 2005, xxiii-xxiv)

The chosen title for this chapter is, 'Down The Far Wires', it might also, on reflection, have been, 'On The Hither Side'. Solutions to the problem of how poetry works are not to be found, even if we find some avenues to explore, like reverberation, phenomenology, the embodied mind, the gut brain, and so on, because Paterson is probably right when he says 'poetry remystifies' and in so doing provides an ongoing and insoluble dynamic. We can only make sense of it by allowing our bodies to enter into the mystery. Whatever kind of sense is made when poetry is embodied, it is helpful to recall Bunting's thoughts:

Poetry is seeking to make not meaning but beauty; or if you insist on misusing words, its "meaning" is of another kind, and lies in the relation to one another of lines and patterns of sound, perhaps harmonious, perhaps contrasting and clashing, which the hearer feels rather than understands,

lines of sound drawn in the air which stir deep emotions which have not even a name in prose. (SW 80)

A pursuit for meaning will often be thwarted when faced with the inchoative, the incipient, the rudimentary, with that which is on the hither side. Just because something may not have a name in prose, this does not mean however that there is no meaning to be found, it is simply that the 'meaning is of another kind'.

Chapter Five

‘A casement ope at night.’

This thesis does not espouse a chronological approach, being more thematic and developmental, than linear. However, there is one period which offers a rich pasture to browse. When Wordsworth, in 1800, wrote the preface for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, [published in January 1801] he was declaring what he felt was important for the making of poetry. This introduction continues to be seen as a watershed in the history of poetry.⁸⁴ Wordsworth explained in the preface what he had been trying to achieve:

The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, [in September of 1798] as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart. (734)

Immediately the tension is apparent, between the ‘state of vivid sensation’ and the ‘rational[ly] endeavour’. But the preface also asks searching questions which go beyond this simple tension. Wordsworth was equally clear that the poet had a responsibility, and hence, he wrote the preface so that:

I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonourable accusations which can be brought against an Author; namely that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it. (734)

It is equally clear that Wordsworth had ascertained for himself what this duty was:

To choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and further and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly

though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. (734)

Often, with hindsight, when reflecting upon an important moment, it is tempting to wonder what all the fuss is about. Looking at most modern anthologies, the majority of the poems would fit snugly into Wordsworth's description. It is tempting to think this has always been the way. In the late eighteenth century however Wordsworth was conscious of poems being written in a different style and that readers 'have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers'. (734)

However, there is also a danger posed by the appeal to delve into the Romantics.

As Marilyn Butler says in her conclusion to *Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries*:⁸⁵

How many students have puzzled themselves into antipathy, trying to fathom what the *Lyrical Ballads* initiated; or what the common denominator may be in various writers' attitudes to the self, to God, or to nature; or precisely why Shelley, Scott and Byron must be said to be Romantic? (187)

Much of Butler's book cautions against an approach which presupposes that there was any such homogenous movement as Romanticism, suggesting instead that whilst there may have been one or two discernible commonalities there was just as much division and contradiction. For her:

Romanticism is inchoate because it is not a single intellectual movement but a complex of responses to certain conditions which western society has experienced and continues to experience since the middle of the eighteenth century. (184)

For our part what we need to do is to keep in the forefront of our enquiry our preoccupations with the role of the body and the senses, the emergence of the psyche, the operation of the unconscious, and Bachelard's idea of reverberation and ask ourselves if the Romantic period can offer us insights into our themes. Certainly Wordsworth was aware of the importance the body for he makes reference in his preface to his wish 'to

keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing, I shall interest him'. Also, noticing that Aristotle had said that poetry was the 'most philosophical of all writing', Wordsworth agreed but said that it still needed to be, 'carried into the heart by passion'. And about the senses he had this to say:

The objects of the poets' thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation, in which to move his wings. (738)

Wordsworth is thought to have first met Coleridge in late September 1795, at the house of a Mr Pinney, in Bristol. In 1797 their intimacy grew while they were living as neighbours at Nether Stowey, and then Alfoxden, in Somerset. Here they conceived *Lyrical Ballads* as a joint venture. However, whilst Wordsworth spoke of passion, and endeavoured to keep his reader 'in the company of flesh and blood', there were limits to his willingness to take on board some of the themes which were to emerge during the next twenty years.

In December 1817, after the French Revolution and the end of the Napoleonic conflict a meeting took place. Butler describes how Wordsworth, by then, 'the acknowledged greatest poet of the day' met with the 'nearly unknown' Keats. She tells how Benjamin Robert Haydon later reported what happened:

Wordsworth received him kindly, & after a few minutes, Wordsworth asked him what he had been lately doing. I said he has just finished an exquisite ode to Pan [in *Endymion*] and as he had not a copy I begged Keats to repeat it - which he did in his usual half chant (most touching) walking up and down the room - when he had done I felt really, as if I had heard a young Apollo - Wordsworth drily said 'a Very pretty piece of Paganism' - This was unfeeling, & unworthy of his high Genius to a young Worshipper like Keats - & Keats felt it very *deeply*. (136)

However, Butler points out that, 'to proclaim the cult of Pan at that time to Wordsworth's face was surely itself a kind of affront'. This is because, despite his earlier revolutionary

tendencies, the older Wordsworth was not party to the emerging support for paganism after the end of the war, being more conservative in nature by then.⁸⁶

To illustrate how there were different factions among The Romantics, each espousing different ideas, we need look no further than the Marlow group. In 1817, Shelley and Peacock had moved to Marlow and were within walking distance of each other, and between April and July Leigh Hunt took his family to stay with the Shelleys. This period gave rise to the Marlow group: Peacock, Shelley, Leigh Hunt and through mutual connections, Hazlitt, Byron and Keats on the periphery. As part of a wider interest in the Greek myths, members of the group became interested in the story of 'Cupid and Psyche', from Apuleis's *Golden Ass*. Mary Shelley translated half of it later that year. This interest indicates that there were some, Keats and Shelley among them, who were keenly interested in exploring other ways of expression than those offered by Hebraic Christianity. The Marlow group's interest in the Psyche myth is an example of a wider interest in the psyche, which had been growing for some time. This interest would come to play a central part for some of the Romantics. There are signs of its emergence before the watershed of 1800, and not just in literature. Pointing to the work of other authors about the Romantic period, Butler summarises M.H.Abrams's argument as put forward in his *The Mirror and Lamp*:

Abrams virtually echoes Schlegel's argument that modern poetry begins in this era by a decisive breach with classical poetry. The Romantic writer is distinguished from the eighteenth century writer, he argues, by a changed perception of what a poem is and what it does. For the classicist, says Abrams, the work of art resembles a mirror, which is passively mimetic or reproductive of existing 'reality', and for the Romantic a lamp, which throws out images originating not in the world but in the poet. Art becomes subjective rather than objective, and intuitive rather than rationally planned. (7)⁸⁷

From the notion of the subjective it is a short step to see that the individual is emerging as the central character. Questions of morality and ethics are no longer the

exclusive province the philosopher/teacher, such as Plato, who, in his own time, wrote the definitive treatise upon what society and the individual should be doing. Those questions have become the responsibility of the individual and to no small degree the province of the artist. Butler's view is that during the Romantic period the role of the artist in society was defined anew and has remained substantially unchanged. As part of the increased subjectivity, it was natural that the psyche [what Wordsworth termed in his preface 'the primary laws of our nature'] would play a burgeoning role. Abrams also highlights the other great shift, from the rational to the intuitive. This cannot be underestimated, and it must be born in mind that both the subjective/objective, rational/intuitive oppositions were operating concurrently, and interpenetrating one another, thus enhancing the potency of both. The subjective, intuitive artist/writer was going to be interested in his own inner psychic workings and prepared to listen to his 'gut instincts' in a new way. It hardly needs pointing out that this is a far cry from the Iliadic mind which we saw in the first chapter.

After the end of the war there were those, Coleridge included, who wished to see a conservatism restored, which included a mainstream Christianity. The Marlow group became interested in themes which ran counter to this tendency and 'conveniently fortified the post war liberal's wish to challenge a resurgent, institutional, politically reactionary Christianity'. (Butler. 131) Their explorations looked into comparative religion and they argued that the nature cults and rituals, which could be seen occurring in most societies, were evidence that what man really worshipped was Nature itself and in particular the sexual drive which underlay everything. So as early as 1791, Erasmus Darwin was combining his work on the propagation of the species with ancient mythology. This led in Butler's view to the idea that:

The well-known classical tales of the loves of gods and goddesses were anthropomorphic representations of a general truth about nature. Pagan

mythology seemed preoccupied by love (a demerit, to admirers of the Bible like Coleridge) because primitive man perceived that the natural world was driven by sex. (129)

Two papers were specifically devoted to the phallus. Sir Willam Hamilton's *Account of the Remains of the Worship of Priapus*, was distributed privately by Richard Payne Knight in 1786, together with Payne's own, *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus, and its Connection with the mystic theology of the ancients*. The impact of these papers and the movement towards paganism was not, as we know, to convert the whole country to a new religion, but there were significant repercussions. For some writers there was to be a change in the manner in which certain subjects were to be treated. Butler summarises what she sees as the shift:

The anthropologists had provided a naturalistic 'explanation' for religion, as man's imaginative re-enactment of underlying truths in the natural world. Such an explanation was far less reductive than earlier accounts of mythology as poetic corruptions of originally monotheistic religions. The crucial fact about the classicism of Shelley and Peacock is that it does evolve into paganism – not so much an aesthetic as an ideological cult, an interpretation of man's oldest beliefs which stresses first that they are inventions, and second that they belong to a natural rather than a supernatural order. What is more – a significant advantage in a propaganda war – the cult of sexuality is celebratory and joyous; it shows up in its most unfavourable light the authoritarian, ascetic and life denying tendencies of Hebraic Christianity. (131)

Against this background of an increased interest in the self and intuition, as opposed to the objective and rational, it is interesting to ask what it was about the story of Cupid and Psyche in particular which aroused the attention of the Marlow group. The story, as related by Apuleius in his *Golden Ass*, is simple enough on one level. Psyche, one of three daughters of a king, is a young woman who is so beautiful that the people begin to worship her. Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty is jealous of this usurpation by a mortal and sends her son Cupid to cause Psyche to fall in love with an ugly man. However, Cupid himself falls for Psyche and builds an enchanted palace in which he

installs Psyche on the understanding that he will only visit her at night and that she must never look upon him. Psyche, egged on by her wicked sisters, cannot restrain herself and one night lights a lamp to view her sleeping lover. Oil spills from the lamp, waking him and Cupid duly disappears along with the palace. The rest of the story tells how Psyche goes through trials and tribulations until she wins back Cupid and is immortalized by Zeus for her efforts. Their relationship is legitimized by a marriage conducted according to the proper rites and Psyche gives birth to a daughter, who is called Voluptia in Latin, Pleasure in English.

The interpretation of this story is more problematic. Thomas Taylor, who published a translation in 1795, saw it as the union of the Soul with love itself, resulting in pure desire. Attendant upon this is suffering, the soul suffering in the body, searching for the lost perfection enjoyed by the lovers originally, ultimately leading to the triumph of Love. Erasmus Darwin saw the story as evidence of the embodiment of fulfilled sexual love and this view is endorsed by Richard Payne Knight who read it as ‘an example of the centrality in ancient myth of the sexual act.’ (Butler 133)

The poets, Keats in his *Ode to Psyche* and in *Lamia*, Peacock in *Rhododaphne*, Shelley in *Prometheus Unbound* and in *The Witch of Atlas* and Byron in *Don Juan*, all continued to explore the subject and sexuality in particular. Looking at Keats’s *Ode To Psyche*, we find that he uses a meeting as his introductory device. He is walking ‘in a forest thoughtlessly’ when, by surprise, he comes upon ‘two fair creatures’ sleeping on the ground in an embrace, possibly resolving after lovemaking. He has no trouble in recognizing Cupid immediately as ‘the winged boy’ but then wonders about his companion ‘But who was’t thou, O happy, happy dove?’ He answers, without much hesitation, ‘His Psyche true!’

In the 1935 Forman edition of Keats's letters there is an interesting misprint. The editor concludes the line 'His Psyche true', with a question mark rather than an exclamation. Motion, in his biography of Keats, gives us a photostat of the poet's own manuscript and it is quite clear the exclamation is used. Forman's error almost makes us believe that what Keats is doing is wondering whether it is indeed Psyche he is seeing, whereas in the manuscript version there is no doubt that Psyche is recognised quite quickly. The point is that when we do encounter Psyche there may be a moment, a split second perhaps, when we are unsure, and certainly the device of the hesitant meeting in the ode is apposite. Cupid is recognized instantly, whilst it takes a little longer to work out that the other is Psyche.

During this flurry of interest by some of the Romantics, we see a re-acquaintance with Psyche, in a way which is new. Keats treats her in his ode as a figure of neglect. As a mortal and a newcomer to the pantheon of the gods, elevated to immortality by Zeus, she is the last of the gods to take her place. As such Keats argues that she never received the veneration she deserved in the ancient world and he intends to remedy this oversight. He will build his own temple to her, he himself will be her choir, her priest, and give her the attention she deserves. Such treatment by him culminates in these last four lines:

And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

'Ode to Psyche' John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, Ed. John Barnard 3rd edn
Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998 p.340

Whatever other interpretations of the story are possible, Keats's message is clear. Meeting Psyche is a source of delight. Just as in Apuleius where the story concludes with the birth of Pleasure so Keats ends his ode with letting 'Love in'.

Earlier in the same year, 1819, Keats had already dealt with a very similar theme in 'The Eve of St Agnes', where a lover might be treated to delight:

They told her how, upon St Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Madeline does as she is bid and her lover Porphyro comes from afar in the night and is let into her room where he hides and watches her sleep. Eventually he creeps out, and picking up her lute, he plays to her and she awakes. Despite the danger they are in, the lovers manage to escape and flee into the storm. 'The Eve of St Agnes' is about ritual, superstition even. It is certainly not about orthodox Christianity. It reveals to us that if humans focus their gaze upon the heavens, observing the proper ritual, they can expect a blessing. This heavenly gaze is not from a Christian supplicant to an all powerful God but simply the prayer of a young woman entitled to believe that if she remains steadfast in her gaze that she can influence her own destiny. It is hardly surprising that Butler, in attempting to summarise the effects of Keat's worldview, describes it as:

An alternative credo, human-centred, fulfilled, undivided, a Psyche-soul
whose final act is 'to let the warm love in'. [134]

Perhaps in that one phrase 'human-centred', more than any other, we witness the shift which is still going on today, away from the notion that it is God who dictates what happens in the world to one where it is possible for mankind to be the author of its own fate. The fact that sexuality is at the heart of this belief only makes the schism with the old church all the more apparent. It is also hugely influential in re-visioning the role of

the body. It is through the body, through bodily desire and pleasure, through the act of sexual love that delight and pleasure are achieved.

Motion says of Keats's odes as a whole:

Yet in their different ways, the odes are all concerned with the same ideas that dominate his earlier and later work. They investigate the value and nature of the creative process and the role played by negative capability. They explore the relation between conscious and unconscious forces, between art and life, and between 'philosophy' and 'sensation'. They parallel sexual feelings with mental activity. They struggle to transcend time, and are fully aware of being written within time. As their themes mingle and clash, they create an extraordinary combination of inwardness and sociability. Contemplating Psyche, examining the Grecian urn, listening to the nightingale, investigating melancholy, analyzing indolence, Keats defines his individual self while registering his dependence upon surrounding conditions. His pursuit of 'beauty' and 'truth' is both a lament for lost ideals and a celebration of their transfigured continuance.

What is happening in the Romantic period is the emergence of the ideas, and of the language, with which we are familiar today. Out of this human centredness comes the idea that each individual is responsible for their own progress. Keats most famously alerted us to this with the notion of the 'vale of Soul-making' in a letter to his brother. (GIT 249) This letter is very long and was written in stages between February and May 1819. Towards the end of the letter Keats is meditating upon the human condition and suggests, 'the whole appears to resolve into this—that Man is originally 'a poor forked creature' subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other' (GIT 249). He then goes on to conclude, in a passage which deserves to be set out in full that:

Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making". Then you will find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it) I say '*Soul making*' Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence—There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in

millions—but they are not the Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. I[n]telligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God—How then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each ones individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the chrystain religion—or rather it is system of Spirit-creation—This is effected by three grand materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years—These three Materials are the *Intelligence*—the *human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the *World* or *Elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul* or *Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity*. (GIT 249-250)

Understandably, this letter has become famous, largely because of the expression ‘The vale of Soul-making’, however there are other aspects which are of interest for this thesis. Keats distinguishes between what he sees as the intelligence of the human heart as opposed to the mind. This corresponds with much of Merleau-Ponty’s view of the body as the main source of ‘intelligence’. Also Keats observes that his three grand materials act upon each other for the purpose of forming the soul: this is reverberation at work in another form. And lastly the notion that each person is responsible for the ultimate identity of their Soul, formed as it is by their interaction with the world, foreshadows much of modern culture and is the basis of much modern psychological thinking as to how the individual develops. Perhaps what Keats felt about soul-making was not quite what Wordsworth had in mind when he wrote in his Preface of ‘the primary laws of our nature’, but both poets were, in their own way, investigating what are the essential qualities of being human.

As part of this investigation some of the Romantic poets embarked upon a use of language which was appropriate to what they saw as the way in which the mind could now be viewed; essentially as susceptible to more than one state. The mind is no longer seen as the seat of rationality alone, it is no longer the place of consciousness and thought

but a whole range of other possibilities is opened up. The word nympholepsy, used in connection with Keats in particular, and his *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* is used to describe that state of rapture or ecstasy brought on by an encounter with a nymph. The 'wretched wight' has been enchanted, he is no longer in full control of his mind, having been sung to by the 'faery's child' who then says to him 'in language strange .. I love thee true'. The wight ends up 'in thrall'. He is wrapt, absorbed, rendered immobile by a powerful influence. For Coleridge of course, such an influence came from another, external source, but what is emerging is the knowledge that the mind is not always under our direct control.

In *Don Juan*, Byron's language is infused with words and phrases which visit the least conscious states of mind: 'dizzy brain', 'all his senses passed', 'pallid aspect', 'damp trance', 'senses dim', 'heavy faintness', 'dizziness', 'dozed', 'swimming eyes', 'faint head', 'mystical and gay', 'hush'd', 'droop'd', 'lull'd'. There is an increasing palette of language to describe the mind. In these states men and women are not entirely in control of their mental faculties. This allows for a set of reverberations to be set up which is greater than that of a simple contrast between consciousness and unconscious. There is subtlety here. We can move between degrees as well as the extremes of polarity. The mind is becoming flexible, plastic, malleable, rather than a hard-wired mechanism purely given over to rational thought. To borrow from Bani Shorter's book title the mind has become 'susceptible'. Prone, impressionable, easily influenced and affected by emotions, the mind is taking on the picture we have of it today.⁸⁸ Wordsworth may have been limited in his view of just how much the mind may be affected by external phenomena, but he certainly began something significant when he began to write about the effect of Nature upon man. Twenty years later he may have been dismayed and a little anxious as to how far matters had progressed, but by the time the second wave of

the Romantics were in full swing, the way in which the mind was viewed had altered significantly. Certainly Plato would have been dismayed. The very thing he was afraid of had come to pass; the poets were expressing the ecstatic state and advocating it consciously.

The poet Bill Herbert remarked recently that ‘the Romantic mind considered itself irrational’.⁸⁹ Whether such a statement is entirely accurate or not, certainly, after Keats had offered us the ideas of soul-making, Negative Capability and the Mansion of Many Apartments, it is hard to maintain the notion of the mind as the seat of rationality alone.⁹⁰ Perhaps what the Romantics began to offer, whether consciously or otherwise, was an emerging sense of the human being as a psychological creature with a complex and multi-layered psyche. A.S.Byatt, in *Unruly Times*, describes Coleridge as:

A great man and a great psychologist, and beneath both the very real suffering and the hysterical self-pity, self-accusation and self-accusing, was a steady intellectual curiosity about the relationship between the body and mind, intellect and emotions (what he called thought and feeling) (34)

Byatt also tells a lovely story which illustrates Coleridge’s curiosity and also gives us some corroboration for the notion of the gut [brain] as a source of instinctual knowledge:

It is typical of him that, having been seized in a field with an excruciating attack of diarrhoea and faintness, he should climb back onto the stile he had failed to get over and make notes in his pocket book about the effects on his emotions of the weakness in his stomach, and the uses of the word ‘bowels’ in the Bible to denote the affections. (36)

There is an interesting discussion in Butler’s conclusion to her book. She is taking the critic Harold Bloom to task:

Like many other latter-day pronouncements on Romanticism, Bloom’s work seems itself ultra-Romantic. Its imaginative roots unmistakably go down to thinkers of a later period than the early nineteenth century, like Nietzsche and Freud. (185)

Maybe, however, what Butler fails to appreciate is that some of the Romantics were indeed the precursors of the likes of Nietzsche and Freud. The humanism of the Marlow

group foreshadows the death of God and the whole preoccupation with the psyche allows for the emergence of the discipline of psychology in the 1880's. Butler does acknowledge that during the Romantic period 'it may be possible to discern the developing psychopathology of the modern artist'. (184). If, indeed, Freud did say something to the effect that the poets had got there before him, then the Romantics may well have been those he had in mind. In addition, although only the artist's pathology is mentioned, the Romantic period may well have been significant in the emergence of modern psychopathology in general terms. We have already looked in some detail at the type of language employed by some of the Romantics which allowed for the recognition of states of mind which were more subtle than a binary division between the conscious and the unconscious. Such language may have allowed for a more multi-layered view of the psyche to emerge but it would be equally wrong to dismiss the profound effects produced by the interaction between the conscious/unconscious, rational/instinctive. Such binary tensions remain at the bedrock of creativity.

Moving forward from the Romantics I would like to return to the work of the Henri Poincaré, the 20th Century French mathematician, who has a great deal to say about the tension between the conscious and unconscious. We have already considered some of his ideas on the discovery of new links between hitherto disparate entities in the first chapter. He also wrote at length and with eloquence, about his own creative process. I have deliberately chosen to quote extensively from Poincaré's work in which he describes how he came upon certain of his ideas. No attempt has been made to précis what Poincare is saying because it seems more important to let his story unfold. Embedding his story in the text at this point is an appropriate way of showing how the tension operates and is also true to the process of creativity itself, because, as will appear, it is impossible to avoid letting time take its course. It is not always helpful to

summarise. Sometimes, hearing the whole story, allows for a mood to develop and to fully appreciate how the dynamic of the process of making operates in both time and space.

Poincaré begins to describe his struggle with the Fuschian functions:

For fifteen days I strove to prove that there could not be any functions like those I have since called Fuschian functions. I was then very ignorant; every day I seated myself at my work table, stayed an hour or two, tried a great number of combinations and reached no results. One evening contrary to my custom, I drank black coffee and could not sleep. Ideas rose in crowds; I felt them collide until pairs interlocked, so to speak, making a stable combination. By the next morning I had established the existence of a class of Fuschian functions ... I had only to write out the results, which took but a few hours. Then I wanted to represent these functions by the quotient of two series; this idea was perfectly conscious and deliberate, the analogy with elliptical functions guided me.

Just at this time I left Caen, where I was then living, to go on a geological excursion under the auspices of the school of mines. The changes of travel made me forget my mathematical work. Having reached Coutances, we entered an omnibus to go to some place or other. At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it, that the transformations I had used to define the Fuschian functions were identical with those of non-Euclidian geometry. I did not verify the idea; I should not have had time, as, upon taking my seat in the omnibus, I went on with a conversation already commenced, but I felt a perfect certainty. On my return to Caen, for conscience's sake I verified the results at my leisure.

Then I turned my attention to the study of some arithmetical questions apparently without much success and without a suspicion of any connection with my preceding researches. Disgusted with my failure, I went to spend a few days at the sea-side, and thought of something else. One morning, walking on the bluff, the idea came to me, with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness and immediate certainty, that the arithmetic transformations of indeterminate ternary quadratic forms were identical with those of non-Euclidian geometry.

Returned to Caen, I meditated on this result and deduced the consequences. [Here he goes into great mathematical detail as to how he proceeded and then concludes the passage with] All this work was perfectly conscious.

Thereupon I left for Mont-Valerian, where I was to go through my military service; so I was very differently occupied. One day going along the street, the solution of the difficulty which had stopped me suddenly appeared to me. I did not try to go deep into it immediately, and only after

my service did I again take up the question. I had all the elements and had only to arrange them and put them together. So I wrote out my final memoir at a single stroke and without difficulty.

I shall limit myself to this single example; it is useless to multiply them. In regard to my other researches I would have to say analogous things, and the observations of other mathematicians given in *L'Enseignement Mathématique* would only confirm them.

Most striking at first is this appearance of a sudden illumination, a manifest sign of long, unconscious prior work. The role of this unconscious work in mathematical invention appears to me incontestable, and traces of it would be found in other cases where it is less evident. Often when one works at a hard question, nothing good is accomplished at the first attack. Then one takes a rest, longer or shorter, and sits down anew to the work. During the first half hour, as before, nothing is found, and then all of a sudden the decisive idea presents itself to the mind. It might be said that the conscious work has been more fruitful because it has been interrupted and the rest has given back to the mind its force and freshness. But it is more probable that this rest has been filled out with unconscious work and that the result of this work has afterward revealed itself to the geometer just as in the cases I have cited; only the revelation, instead of coming during a walk or a journey, has happened during a period of conscious work, but independently of this work which plays at most a role of excitant, as if it were the goad stimulating the results already reached during rest, but remaining unconscious, to assume the conscious form.

There is another remark to be made about the conditions of this unconscious work: it is possible, and of a certainty it is only fruitful, if it is on the one hand preceded and on the other hand followed by a period of conscious work. These sudden inspirations ... never happen except after some days of voluntary effort which has appeared fruitless and whence nothing good seems to have come, where the way taken seems totally astray. These efforts then have not been as sterile as one thinks; they have set agoing the unconscious machine and without them it would not have moved and would have produced nothing.

Before concluding Poincaré alerts us to two provisos:

The need for the second period of conscious work, after the inspiration, is still easier to understand. It is necessary to put into shape the results of this inspiration, to deduce from them the immediate consequences, to arrange them, to word the demonstrations, but above all is verification necessary. I have spoken of the feeling of absolute certitude accompanying the inspiration; in the cases cited this feeling was no deceiver, nor it is usually. But do not think this rule without an exception; often this feeling deceives us without being any the less vivid, and we only find it out when we seek to put on foot the demonstration. I have especially noticed this fact in regard to ideas coming to me in the morning

or evening in bed while in a semi-hypnagogic [literally, 'sleep-inducing'] state.

And he concludes:

Such are the realities; now for the thoughts they force upon us. The unconscious, or as we say the subliminal self plays an important role in mathematical creation ... but usually the subliminal self is considered as purely automatic. [He describes how the unconscious can hardly be automatic because the choices it makes from endless possibilities cannot possibly be automatic and asks himself how can this be] A first hypothesis now presents itself: the subliminal self is in no way inferior to the conscious self; it is not purely automatic; it is capable of discernment; it has tact, delicacy; it knows how to choose, to divine. What do I say? It knows better how to divine than the conscious self, [here I leave my typing error. The slip resulting in the conversion of self into elf seems too appealing in view of what has just been said about the evolution of the psyche] since it succeeds where that has failed. In a word is not the subliminal self superior to the conscious self?...What is the cause that, among the thousand products of our unconscious activity, some are called to pass the threshold, while others remain below? Is it a simple chance which confers this privilege? Evidently not...those susceptible of becoming conscious, are those which directly or indirectly, affect most profoundly our emotional sensibility.

It may be surprising to see emotional sensibility invoked *a propos* of mathematical demonstrations which, it would seem, can interest only the intellect. This would be to forget the feeling of mathematical beauty, of the harmony of numbers and forms, of geometric elegance. This is a true esthetic feeling that all real mathematicians know, and surely it belongs to emotional sensibility.

Poincaré observes his own process with rare insight and also writes with great sensitivity. From his concluding remarks he declares that mathematics might not, at first sight, be the most fruitful place to seek for an analysis of the creative process, especially the role played by the unconscious. However, summarizing his main observations we find an uncanny parallel with notions offered to us by writers and artists.

For Poincaré not only are both the conscious and unconscious processes important but they work in conjunction with one another, with perhaps the unconscious having the greater claim to creativity. A period of conscious work is followed by an unconscious revelation, followed by some more conscious work. This cycle may be repeated more

than once. His language when describing this cycle is also intriguing. He drinks black coffee, 'contrary to his custom', so he cannot sleep when 'ideas rose in crowds', whereas another idea was 'perfectly conscious and deliberate', then 'changes made me forget', until another idea, 'came to me on a bluff', yet another on the first step of the omnibus. There are echoes of Bunting's advice to young poets which he had printed to send out to those who sent him work. It included the line 'put your poem away until you forget it'.

Poincaré also employs the words 'subliminal' and 'threshold' repeatedly. He is describing with great eloquence many of the features we have already explored. There is reverberation taking place, between the conscious and the unconscious, between one place and another, between one time and another, between surface and depth. We have the same idea of notions and ideas arising or presenting themselves as though already pre-existing and simply to be found or discovered, rather than newly created. And not least, he offers the most exquisite description of the unconscious as having 'discernment, tact and delicacy'. Expanding upon these qualities he asserts that the unconscious has an aesthetic of its own from whence moral and balanced choices emanate.

A word of caution however seems necessary before leaving Poincaré. He suggests that because he has observed this process taking place for himself and has also heard or read other mathematicians speak of it, he concludes that what he is describing must be the common or normal process of creativity. He draws from subjective and anecdotal evidence and suggests an objective truth. This cannot be true, for whatever else we know about creativity we know that it is highly individual and resistant to general classification. Carl Rogers became famous in the last century for his work on the psychological growth of individuals and in particular his 'person-centred' theories. Rogers recognized the tendency of all organisms, including humans, to self actualize to their full potential if offered the right conditions. His interests included creativity. His

essay *Towards a Theory of Creativity* indicates the strength of his feeling that: ‘many of the serious criticisms of our culture and its trends may be best formulated in terms of a dearth of creativity’. (CY137)

Speaking rather grandly about the fate of the world without creativity he observes:

Not only individual maladjustment and group tensions but international annihilation will be the price we pay for a lack of creativity. (CY138)

Whether we agree with these somewhat sweeping assertions it is interesting to explore exactly what Rogers felt constituted creativity:

There are various ways of defining creativity. In order to make more clear the meaning of what is to follow, let me present the elements which, for me, are part of the creative process, and then attempt a definition.

In the first place ... there must be something observable, some product of creation. Though my fantasies may be extremely novel, they cannot be usefully defined as creative unless they eventuate in some observable product – unless they are symbolised in words, or written in a poem, or translated into a work of art or fashioned into an invention. These products must be novel constructions. This novelty grows out of the unique qualities of the individual in his interaction with the materials of experience. Creativity always has the stamp of the individual upon its product, but the product is not the individual, nor his materials, but partakes of the relationship between the two. (CY 138)

My definition, then, of the creative process is that it is the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other. (CY 139) (Italics original)

Rogers helps to return us to the notion of uniqueness and novelty which was so beloved of Bachelard in his treatment of the effects of the poetic image. Indeed just as Bachelard told us there was no way to prepare in advance for the novel effects created by the image,

Rogers adds this corroboration:

The very essence of the creative is its novelty, and hence we have no standard by which to judge it. (CY 141)

Rogers may well be overstating the case, but it is prudent to bear in mind that a preconceived notion or definition of creativity may be dangerous and indeed unattainable.

For example, if we turn to Freud for his thoughts on what constitutes creativity, we find this comment in *Creative writers and day-dreaming*:

We laymen have always been intensely curious to know – like the cardinal who put a similar question to Ariosto – from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable. Our interest is only heightened the more by the fact that, if we ask him, the writer himself gives us no explanation, or none that is satisfactory. (CY 126)

We may not agree that writers are so incapable, especially since it has become more and more common for writers and other artists to communicate on this very subject. However Freud, like Rogers, makes points that are worth consideration. Not surprisingly perhaps, Freud looks for the origins of creativity in childhood and in the play and games of children. He points out that children construct in their games their own worlds, which they take very seriously. He goes on:

In spite of all the emotion with which he cathects [attaching mental energy to an idea or object] his world of play, the child distinguishes it quite well from reality ... The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously – that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion – while separating it sharply from reality. Language has preserved this relationship between children's play and poetic creation. It gives (in German) the name of *Spiel* ('play') to those forms of imaginative writing which require to be linked to tangible objects and which are capable of representation. It speaks of a *Lutspiel* or *Trauerspiel* ('comedy' or 'tragedy': literally, 'pleasure play' or 'mourning play') and describes those who carry out the representation as *Schauspieler* ('players': literally 'show players'). The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real. (CY 127) [One recalls Shakespeare's 'merely players' from *As You Like It* and his 'poor player' from *Macbeth*]

Freud continues his explanation by saying that as we grow older and mature we cease to play, and instead day-dreaming takes over the function previously fulfilled by play:

As people grow up, then, they cease to play and they seem to give up the yield of pleasure which they gained from playing. But whoever understands the human mind knows that hardly anything is harder for a man to give up than pleasure which he had once experienced. Actually, we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another. What appears to be a renunciation is really the formation of a substitute or surrogate. In the same way, the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects; instead of *playing* he now *phantasies*. (CY 127)

The constituent parts of this day-dreaming are interesting for Freud. He suggests that dissatisfaction lies at the source and that day-dreams are in some way wish fulfillment, linked either to ambition or eroticism. His thoughts on time however are intriguing.

The relation of a phantasy to time is in general very important. We may say that it hovers, as it were, between three times – the three moments of time which our ideation involves. Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to a memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and now it creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. What it thus creates is a day-dream of phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origin from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory. Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them. (CY 130)

Although we may have concerns about whether Freud's explanation of day-dreaming is sufficient for understanding creativity, this treatment of time appears tenable and harks back to Bachelard's thoughts on returning to the origin. There are parallels to what we shall read when we hear later of Hughes writing about his early boyhood pastimes and also echoes of Paterson's idea that we do not lose that earlier remembered experience, but simply continue with it as new experiences brought about by differentiation taking place. In short, it seems Freud, Paterson and Hughes in their own ways are restating Bachelard's idea of reverberation.

This PhD began as a wish to explore a phrase which is attributed to Freud. It has been suggested that he said: 'Everywhere I go, I find that a poet has been there before me'. If Bachelard and others are right then Freud too in his turn was right because the poet places us at the beginning, and it follows that if the poet finds himself placed at the origin, he will always be there first and his images will always, in part, be a reverberation of that beginning.

Let us conclude this chapter with the words of a poet. For the final chapter of his *Poetry in the Making* Ted Hughes takes 'Words and Experience' as his title. As with the rest of this book the language and style are simple. What is said however seems to be as fine a description as any other of what is involved in attempting to translate experience into words, and into poetry in particular.

Hughes takes two simple events, the flight of a crow across the sky and the visit of a begging tramp to his door, to illustrate his point. Echoing much of what we have explored already, in particular Paterson's thoughts on the failure of words to do the job, Hughes writes:

Words are tools, learned late and laboriously and easily forgotten, with which we try to give some part of our experience a more or less permanent shape outside of ourselves. They are unnatural, in a way, and far from being ideal for the job. For one thing, a word has its own definite meanings. A word is its own little solar system of meanings. Yet we are wanting it to carry some part of our meaning, and the meaning of our experience is finally unfathomable, it reaches into our toes and back to before we were born and into the atom, with vague shadows and the changing features, and the elements that no expression of any kind can take hold of. And this is true of even the simplest experience. (119)

So experience affects our bodies, 'reaches into our toes' and goes 'back to before'.

Hughes writes about that moment when his observer sees:

In one flash, a single 1000-volt shock, that lit up everything and drove it into his bones. (120)

He also knows that we pick up experience in many, many, ways, most of which we do not begin to understand. He does admit that much of it lies below the threshold of what we call consciousness however. So:

It is one thing to get the information, and quite another to become conscious of it, to know that we have got it. (121)

And later:

And watching a tramp go away, even if you have just been subliminally burdened with his entire biography. (123)

He then finishes, with this climax of what it is to come to terms with our experience as human beings:

The struggle truly to possess his own experience, in other words to regain his genuine self, has been man's principal occupation, wherever he could find leisure for it, ever since he grew this enormous surplus of brain. Men have invented religion to do this for others. But to do it for themselves, they have invented art – music, painting, dancing, sculpture, and the activity that includes all of these, which is poetry.

Because it is occasionally possible, just for brief moments, to find the words that will unlock the doors of all those many mansions inside the head and express something – perhaps not much, just something – of the crush of information that presses in on us, from the way a crow flies over and the way a man walks and the look of a street and from what we did one day a dozen years ago. Words that will express something of the deep complexity of that makes us precisely the way we are, from the momentary effect of the barometer to the force that created men distinct from trees. Something of the inaudible music that moves us along in our bodies from moment to moment like water in a river. Something of the spirit of the snowflake in the water of the river. Something of the duplicity and the relativity and the merely fleeting quality of all this. Something of the almighty importance of it and something of the utter meaninglessness. And when words can manage something of this, and manage it in a moment of time, and in that same moment make out of it all the vital signature of a human being - not of an atom, or of a geometrical diagram, or a heap of lenses – but a human being, we call it poetry. (124)

Hughes, in the introduction, says he wrote *Poetry in the Making* 'for children' and 'also for teachers'. Unlike Plato, Hughes is not afraid of poetry and what it might do, he fully acknowledges its power. Instead he considers poetry to be inevitable: 'man's principal occupation' in the 'struggle to possess his own experience'. I believe Hughes to be right

and what he says highlights the error, made by Descartes and others, to attempt to make a distinction between what we are and what we do. I believe that when we seek to make something poetical (here used in the sense of any product of creativity) we are merely expressing what it is to be human. To be human is to be poetical and to make something out of that is not to choose an external function but to reflect upon the experience of being 'precisely the way we are'. Instead of espousing censorship in the face of the power of poetry, Hughes sets out to give his young readers examples of poems which 'are meant to serve as models for the kind of writing children can do without becoming false to themselves'. Poetry is not about making us better human beings but it offers the chance to be truthful about what it is like to be human. This will encompass the good and the bad and the ugly and at its best will reflect 'what is really happening to us'. As Hughes says of the young writers in whom he places his faith and for whom he wrote the book:

Their words should be not "How to write" but "How to try to say what you really mean" – which is part of the search for self-knowledge and perhaps, in one form or another, grace. (12)

Chapter Six

‘And keep the bridge with me?’

This chapter is intended to serve two functions. It will look at the main themes covered so far from a personal perspective, addressing the general question: how has my own body been involved in the body of work which comprises this thesis? It will also form a bridge between the critical section and the creative writing section by considering how personal narrative is implicated in the creative process.

Carol Rumens, in her 2004 Bloodaxe Lecture, delivered at The University of Newcastle, used the phrase, ‘hymnology invaded the mind’. She was referring to that time in our youth when a form of language takes up residence within us, invited or otherwise. That language remains with us and whether we are conscious of it or not, it informs who we are and how we relate to language in later life.⁹¹ Although hymnology means the study of hymns, her sense of the term was intended to suggest that if there was any studying done, it was more to do with an everyday exposure to whatever was going on around. The studying was not carried out consciously but by way of osmosis.

Dylan Thomas said that it was the nursery rhymes read by his mother which first gave him his sense of how language could be. He had already begun to listen to the ‘hymns’.⁹² In her new book, Anne Karpf tells us that even babies in utero are able to pick up and identify a voice because it is clear that ‘after they are born, babies smile not when they see their mother’s face, but when they hear her voice’.⁹³ We have adopted the word ‘anthem’ to refer to those songs, which as adults, we consider to be influential, huge, significant. We have collections of ‘The Greatest Anthems...Ever’, whether chosen for us by the record companies or compiled ourselves in those tapes or CD’s which we make of our favourites. These are our personal hymns. For some reason our choices work for

us and upon us to produce an effect, and we use them accordingly, to enhance our joys or deepen our melancholy. Desert Island Discs retains its appeal because it combines that heady mixture of music and personal story which can move us so deeply. Perhaps we are not consciously aware of what our personal hymns are but if asked over the dinner table which records we would take to the island there is a reverie which descends as the story unfolds. When the speaker reveals their choices they fascinate both speaker and listener.

Both Rumens, Thomas, and these other examples of our hymns, illustrate how personal narrative informs a person's creative life. Professor Robert Nash in his book *Liberating Scholarly Writing*, argues that what he calls the 'scholarly personal narrative' (SPN), is both creative and valid within academic circles and is also a 'powerful tool for intellectual and self-discovery'.⁹⁴ Kevin Foley, reviewing Nash's book, says that Nash sees the SPN as a 'melding of scholarship, personal self-disclosure and narrative'(1) and then he quotes Nash as saying:

Instead of a traditional dissertation, which might open with a chapter of literature review, a scholarly narrative has references to key scholarly literature embedded in the work itself. (1)

'Embedded' reverberates with the modern usage of journalists involved in conflict but also reminds us of Shorter's use of Eckermann's words: 'Tell me what you create and I shall tell you who you are'.⁹⁵ I would endorse what Nash says about the power of personal narrative:

The way you keep [a class of students'] attention is to tell your own stories. (1)

I recall many years ago being apprehensive about baby-sitting when I had not done it before. I was told 'just tell them stories about yourself when you were their age'.⁹⁶ I was surprised to find that nine times out of ten this worked. Nash does not advocate that the usual intellectual rigour expected of academic work be abandoned but argues:

I'm an intellectual pluralist, I'm about giving people more opportunities to do the kind of scholarship that is most compatible with their interests and talents. (1)

Without seeking to claim any originality, much of what I had already written in this thesis could be categorized as SPN before I knew of the term itself. It also seems to me that some of what follows from other writers, especially Hughes, also falls within the ambit of a SPN. Nash's contribution, paradoxically, may have been to bring some rigorous thinking to a form which already existed.⁹⁷

I am aware that by the time I was 13, probably earlier, I was writing poems.⁹⁸ To prove this, I can still look at the terrible entries which appeared in school magazines, above my name. If I were to indulge myself as my own editor for a moment I might grandly glorify these pieces as 'juvenilia'.⁹⁹ For the purposes of this particular enquiry however, I need to ask not what these efforts were about or whether they were any good but 'how come'; 'how come poetry came to me?' I am struck by parallels with what has already been discussed about *inventio* and discovery. My sense is that I found something already existing within me, a propensity, a tendency, rather than creating something out of nothing. Something waiting, something which needed quickening.

What was it that had invaded my mind and so reverberated that I had discovered the reading and writing of poems? It is true that like most of my generation I had been exposed to hymns. I had met them at school assemblies, Sunday School, School Chapel every morning for five years and Abbey Sundays once a term. Labelled 'tone deaf' by the music master I seldom sang, and if at all, quietly. I discovered much later in life the label was false and joining a community choir for a while I reckoned to hit the right note about half the time. Certainly I was moved by the hymns. My passion for watching rugby is only exceeded by the Welsh singing 'Land of my Fathers', before kick-off, and my twenty year old tape of the Treorchy Male Voice Choir is loved beyond good sense. I

recall listening to a group of visiting Bulgarian grandmothers, singing their hearts out to the sea on a Northumbrian beach. I can still hear the tunes my Dad would hum around the house. I don't recall him ever giving words to his songs, just a hum. At ninety-two he still hums and as I watch I realize he has no idea he is doing it.

Moving towards a conclusion of this thesis I remember what Salman Rushdie had to say about endings and memory in *Midnight's Children*:

Scraps of memory: this is not how a climax should be written. A climax should surge towards its Himalayan peak; but I am left with shreds, and must jerk towards my crisis like a puppet with broken strings. This is not what I had planned; but perhaps the story you finish is never the one you begin. (426).¹⁰⁰

Among the scraps I do remember is a smudgy-green copy of 'Palgrave's Golden Treasury'. I do not know how it came into my hands, waiting on the shelves alongside twelve volumes of The Children's Encyclopedia, The Family Doctor, and a scattering of fiction: *Rebecca*, a couple of early orange Penguins and *Elephant Bill* by J.H. Williams. Unprompted, I would read and learn poems from that collection. Some are as clear to me now as when I was twelve or thirteen. Some I found uninteresting and incomprehensible and I felt that I was missing something. Whilst this bothered me, and still does occasionally, the love of other entries far outweighed any anxiety. I pressed on. My favourites, looking back, are telling. Simple easy rhythms bouncing along in easily remembered forms, just like the anthems of Country and Western music that I would come to adopt later and own up to in safe company. How the Chief of Ulva's Isle tried in vain to get away with Lord Ullin's daughter, how Horatio kept the bridge in the brave days of old, how Lochinvar came out of the west. Heroic deeds which animated my boyish mind, actions to accompany my prose reading of Rider Haggard and Sir Walter Scott.¹⁰¹

By the Lower Sixth I had adopted Dylan Thomas and Wilfred Owen, both collections still on my shelves today, stamped with the school crest and carrying the Headmaster's signature, as prizes for Divinity and Ancient History essays. There was also a 'Dead Poets Society' with the English master at his home, with tea and crumpets. But this is more what happened, rather than how come.

As I wonder about the question, I experience a recurring image of playing on the lawn with my father, throwing a ball to each other. Only a few feet apart, slightly bowed, like a couple of slip-catchers we faced each other. It seems as if we spent hours doing this; maybe it was that long. But there was such pleasure. It seemed like the growing up equivalent of being rocked. To and fro, backwards and forwards, you and me, me and you, in and out, up and down. In the winter it was the same, but a football this time, passed backwards and forwards. Ultimately a vain attempt to teach basic skills; the use of both feet, the inside and outside of the foot, bringing a ball down on the chest, trapping, heading, keepie-up. I became a goalkeeper in the end!¹⁰² All the time, consciously unnoticed, there is a sound going on. The beat of ball against hand, against foot, against ground, against hand, against foot. And when Dad was unavailable I would spend time, like Steve MacQueen's Virgil Hilts, 'The Cooler King' in *The Great Escape*, sitting throwing a ball against the side wall of the house ... ground-wall-hand, ground-wall-hand, ground-wall-hand, the beats of ground and wall close together with a gap as it came back to hand, quick-quick-slow, quick-quick-slow. The quickstep was picked up at Mrs Natrass's dancing classes, together with other dances: forward-side-together, forward-side-together, back-forward-cha-cha-cha and the gallop of the Gay Gordon's, the marching orders in the school's Combined Cadet Force: By the right - quick march- left-left, left-right-left.

Whether such an analysis as this is correct, given the scraps of memory, is an interesting question, but what feels undeniable is the impact it has. Simply trying to remember and explain revives sensation. I am back, reverberated, to those moments. The balls are re-caught, re-kicked, the steps re-danced. For me such experience of bodily memory is reliable evidence that these elements did, and still do, have potency. My use of the phrase bodily memory preceded my reading about somatic memory. Even if the mind is incapable of producing a rational explanation, the body can be relied upon to furnish the corroboration required. The feet can still move and make the form of the waltz step. What was happening was preparation, unconscious attention being paid to a process yet to be fully understood.

However, it seems that despite strong evidence to suggest a susceptibility to the beat, this in itself would not be sufficient to prove the attraction of poetry. After all, why not a dancer, a musician, a sportsman, anything which relied on a propensity for rhythm? Of course, it is the words. But again there is a question. How come words are chosen as opposed to movement of the body or an instrument? This is much more elusive. Certainly a family which boasted seven teachers and had a strong ethic towards learning would have been influential. Not that there was any particular bias towards language or poetry in particular. It was expected that language be learned, and learned properly, but no insistence upon verse. Neither parent read especially widely and there was no talk of literature in the house. I had no idea at the time that my maternal grandparents had assiduously kept diaries during their lives or that my mother was continuing this tradition.

With hindsight, I liken the pursuit of words to my love of hunting. The desire came out of nowhere but it had always been there, calling out to be quickened. I can recall being a right royal pain as a child. I always wanted some weapon or another with which I could go hunting, whether to pretend, or for real. Although I spent the first ten

years of my life visiting our family farm nearly every day, having the run of the fields as I grew, there were no hunters or shooters in the family before me, no tradition, nothing in the blood. Again it was as if I discovered something already implanted inside of me. If any hunting went on it was outsiders who were involved. Local men who came with their terriers to catch farmyard rats or very occasionally a group of shooters would gather to have a day at the foxes. I am sure I remember one of those days. Seeing the two, three, four, I can't be sure, bodies stretched out in the yard, the 'guns' standing around them in ritual. I was thrilled, excited beyond reason. It was as though I was revisiting something or somewhere rather than discovering afresh. There have been references elsewhere to that sense of knowing and not knowing and this seems another example.¹⁰³

I experienced the same thrill with words. I hunted words hungrily. Where did words come from, what were their habits, what did they do, how could I recognize one in just a flash. What was it about their form which differentiated them from each other. Though I was not skilled at languages, they helped me with words. The hated German, (nevertheless offering the remembered line 'Wie wunderbaren blumem waren da', given as an example of assonance, alliteration and internal rhyme) the logical Latin, the lovely old Greek with its own signs, French, some Spanish and the strange sounding Chaucer. They were all telling me stories about where words came from, if I cared to listen or look. I am struck by a recently read passage from *Cold Comfort Farm*. Flora is describing her experience of reading a specific book:

Those long words in German and in Latin were solemn and cragged as Egyptian monoliths; and when the reader peered more closely into the meaning of their syllables that rang like bells, backwards into time, they were seen to be frosted with wisdom, cold and irrefutable. (179)¹⁰⁴

Gibbons is using her deliberately overblown style here, but beneath her debunking of literature, a theme which pervades the book, she is offering a clear statement of how words reverberate with us because they have their own history. Each comes with its own

story, or stories, of how it was made and how it has grown and changed. There is a recollection here of Wordsworth's point about 'not entirely in forgetfulness', but Virginia Woolf also made observations about words coming with attachments. In a radio broadcast for the BBC in 1937, entitled 'Craftsmanship', she observed:

Now this power of suggestion is one of the most exciting and most mysterious properties of words. Most exciting if you are a person in the habit of using them. Everyone who has ever written a sentence must *be conscious or half conscious of it*. Words, English words, are full of echoes, memories, associations, naturally, they have been out and about, on peoples lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for so many centuries. And that is one of the chief difficulties of writing today. They are stored with other meanings, with other memories and they have contracted so many famous marriages in the past. The splendid word 'incarnadine', for example, who can use that, without remembering 'multitudinous seas'. In the old days of course when English was a new language writers could invent new words and use them. Nowadays it is easy enough to invent new words, they spring to the lips...but we cannot use them because the English language is old. We cannot use a brand new word in an old language, because it is very obvious, in all this mysterious fact, that a word is not a single and separate entity, it is part of other words, indeed it is not a word until it is part of a sentence, words belong to each other, although of course only a great poet knows that the word 'incarnadine' belongs to 'multitudinous seas'. (Italics mine)¹⁰⁵

Note: “ ... this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red,”
(*Macbeth* II.ii.61).

Clearly Woolf is talking here about language within a literary context, rather than for its own sake, but her observation remains valid when considered alongside the arguments of Bachelard and Paterson about the potential of words to return us to origins. The valencies and attachments which words form along the way are responsible, largely, for the potential for reverberation. Words, via these attachments and valencies, draw us back. Woolf is clear, although not expanding upon the point, that our awareness of the power of suggestion which is contained in words can be either 'conscious or half

conscious'. We cannot use or hear a word without taking into account its memories, associations, its famous marriages, whether we do so consciously or otherwise.

Having thought about my own association with words, it is clear to me now that the fascination and connection I formed with them in my younger years was only partly conscious. At that time I would have found it very difficult to explain quite what it was about words, and poetry in particular, which held my attention. However there was a part of me ready to respond to the offer the words made and to the associations they brought with them. It was then, and remains so now, a delight to encounter words. Their relationship to each other, whether in lines of verse, or sentences in prose, seems only a logical extension of the passion for them as individual entities. Indeed, if it is accepted that words seldom exist without associations, valencies, old connections, that they are 'frosted with wisdom', then it hard to see how they can function on their own.

For me, sometimes it was the sound of the words, sometimes their shape, but often the thrill of the chase. A new word, a new trail to follow. Where did that one come from and what mark did it leave? Just like hunting, the excitement has never gone away. I can try to explain it in words and fail every time. But just like coming home empty handed from hunting, it does not mean that I am disappointed or that I stop. Reading a couple of pieces by Ted Hughes recently, I realize why I like the way he wrote. Not just his poetry, but how he described what he believed writing is about and about how his own writing came about. I would love to have met this man. Not to have talked poems and literature especially, but to have watched him fish, to have taken a walk with him and to have seen the way he moved in the countryside he so obviously loved and understood. Hughes had the scales of fish on his silver hands and the stink of fox in his nostrils, and for me, and I suspect for him too, he knew that these things were not separable from the poems he wrote.

When a hunter comes across a sign he looks for another. One footprint leads to another, bird-shit on a fencepost leads the eye down to the owl pellet below, a movement turns into a creature and all the time a story unfolds. So it is with words. One leads to another. Even single words in themselves lead on. In the word-loving, word-hunting mind, no word fails to carry more than one meaning. And for me, what is shared in the experience of writing and hunting is some form of animation which falls within the ambit of the phrase 'heightened awareness'. This is de Saussure describing the chamois hunters of the Alps who take risks in the mountains when hunting their elusive quarry:

It is these very dangers, this alternation of hope and fear, the continual agitation kept alive by these sensations in his heart, which excite the huntsman, just as they animate the gambler, the warrior, the sailor and, even to a certain point, the naturalist among the Alps whose life resembles closely, in some respects, that of the chamois hunter. (qtd in *Mountains of the Mind*, Robert Macfarlane, p71)

In some sense, I believe a writer can experience the same 'alternation of hope and fear', the same 'continual agitation', the same 'sensations in his heart' as he or she pursues the poem or the story yet to be found. Perhaps that is why Les Murray's phrase 'these feral stanzas' so appeals to me. There is a reverberation between the wildness (wilderness) of words in their natural state and the partial domestication which takes place as they are corralled into form. Partial, because a poem or story, when it is any good, defies total control.

There is a single word which encapsulates what is at the heart of this chapter. It is the word quick. I was first consciously aware of using it as 'quickened' when writing a little later on about Hughes and what he had to say about the spirit and the body of a poem. I realize now that in editing and rewriting I have noticed it appearing as, quick-quick- slow, quick step, quick march, and as a description of how quickly Keats recognizes Psyche in his ode. There is also the 'quick youth' in my poem 'Capra'. I then

turned, as I often do when hunting words, to the OED. Here the valencies, the marriages, the frosted wisdom are revealed. Essentially quick is about life and therefore inevitably about death also. I remember my grandmother would say when she saw a person with a cut which was struggling to heal, which looked open and sore: 'you've got a quick'. Whether this usage hailed from County Durham, where she lived, or Cumbria where she had been raised, or was simply family vernacular, the OED offers quick as having the meaning of 'the tender or sensitive flesh in any part of the body, as that under the nails; also, the tender part of a sore or wound'. Other reverberations pour out from the definitions, some of which are personally intriguing. Quick can be used of possessions, often consisting of livestock. I am interested that I do not recall this use of the word on the farm. I do remember quick-thorn though. I also wonder whether my other grandfather, the miner, ever heard it used of the veins of coal he hewed, for it can mean productive, heavy with ore.

Arising out of a discussion with my partner I was alerted to the quickening of the child in the body, that moment in the pregnancy when the motion of the baby can be felt. For me there is an irresistible reverberation here to the process of creativity. There is a moment, a felt bodily experience when motion confirms the presence of life.¹⁰⁶ This is how I sense the oncoming piece of work. There is a felt sense that something can be vivified from here on in, animation takes over and the process of creativity is under way. Ideas come and go all the time but those which carry with them this quality are, to recall Coltart's word, 'tenacious'. They stick because they are calling for life, calling to be animated, to have form brought to them. I like my grandmother's usage so much because it also highlights the sensitive quality involved. The quick is a wound, something sensitive has been opened up. It is no coincidence then that the quick, that particularly sensitive flesh which lies under the nail has a hard covering for protection. I suddenly

remember my grandmother's family name, 'Armory', my middle name, is derived from the vocation of armourer.

I believe the choice to create involves the possibility of harm. Exposing the sensitive part brings with it the danger of being cut, inevitably, 'to the quick'. I know that I experience an apprehension when making a piece of work and I know that in part this has to do with the potential for hurt. I also know that if I resist the urge to make the work I am also hurt. I know that during the years of writing this thesis I have maintained a degree of detachment from my own life. Resulting from episodes of hurt, some emotional, some psychological, some physical, such a choice has been appropriate. However in the last year or so, by minute degrees, I know this situation has changed and as a result so has the work I have made. I have become more involved, more active, more animated. I have, ever so slowly, begun to come out of that armour that has been my shell. I would like to think that an acute observer might detect this shift, most noticeably in some recent poems: 'Second Earlies', 'Wraiths'.

Just in the last few months I have experienced a clearer sense of this emergence. I have realized that I have been deeply afraid of any activity which would increase my heartbeat. I have avoided anything which would cause me to become out of breath. I am not particularly inactive. I walk, I cycle, sometimes I swim, but all the time I know I have been holding back. Recently I have been excited by the prospect of doing something which would leave me panting. The desire is to experience the thump in my chest. The obvious reverberation is with the pulse and certainly I am aware that I have been only half alive for some time. The implication is that my work has only been half of what I would like to think it could be. It will however depend upon the choice, the risk involved, in pushing my body further than it has been used to going for some time now.

Conversely, the risk of not doing so is equally great. The point is that I know I must begin with my body.

Returning to the theme of early life influences, Ted Hughes is very clear in *Poetry in the Making*, about how he sees the impact of his childhood playing out in his later work:

My zoo was not entirely an indoors affair. [he would make plasticine animals and draw sketches of animals from books] At that time we lived in a valley in the Pennines in West Yorkshire. My brother, who probably had more to do with this passion of mine than anyone else, was a good bit older than I was, and his one interest in life was creeping about on the hillsides with a rifle. He took me along as a retriever and I had to scramble into all kinds of places collecting magpies and owls and rabbits and weasels and rats and curlews that he shot. He could not shoot enough for me. At the same time I used to be fishing daily in the canal, with a long-handled wire-rimmed curtain mesh sort of net.

All that was only the beginning. (16)

After describing how, following a house move, he discovered a nearby farm and private estate which supplied all his needs, when he was about fifteen, he says:

I began to write poems. Not animal poems. It was years before I wrote what you could call an animal poem and several more years before it occurred to me that my writing poems might be a continuation of my earlier pursuit. Now I have no doubt. The special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerized and quite involuntary concentration with which you make out the stirrings of a new poem in your mind, then the outline, the mass and colour and clear form of it, the unique living reality of it in the midst of the general lifelessness, all that is too familiar to mistake. This is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside of your own. (17)

With the phrase ‘the special kind of excitement, the slightly mesmerized and quite involuntary concentration’ we hear from Hughes a clear corroboration for the proposition that the condition, especially the bodily state, of the maker is crucial to creativity. It is apparent that Hughes also recognizes that these states are not always fully conscious and controlled.

There is a danger of over-identification here. One person's experience, however close to your own, is never exactly the same. I recall for example walking in the Northumberland countryside with the poet Andrew Waterhouse. He was passionate about the land and would spend some of his holidays planting trees in the ancient Scottish forests. He owned a small patch of woodland himself, which he had bought and wanted to let 'run wild' but be 'managed' a little at the same time. I was struck by how little he knew about the birds and animals we passed as we walked and how obvious it was to me that the rabbits were not used to being shot at as they played only feet away from us. His eye was looking elsewhere. He was interested in the ground, what would grow there and how. However, I believe he was hunting. Hunting as he had done for the patch of woodland to buy. As de Saussure pointed out in his writing about the chamois hunters there are other people and other ways to experience the same emotions as the hunter. So the gambler hunts among the cards, in the eyes of his opponents at the table, in the tone of their voices in the atmosphere which builds up around the table. The sailor hunts the horizon, he hunts the sky for clouds which may become storms, he hunts the night sky for stars. The urban dweller will also hunt. The streets and alleys, the bars and clubs, will be as familiar to him as the fields and rivers are to the country dweller. 'Big' Richard is a youth worker who hates and does not understand the countryside. On field trips he is frightened, by the black dark of the country night. He is always checking to see that he can still get a signal on his mobile. He looks permanently uneasy. Put him with a group of youths in a rough part of town, at a Bowie gig, or in a record store, and he hunts like us all. His beat is the 80's and his quarry, Super Furry Animals.

If the hunting metaphor is sustainable, two questions arise. What is the quarry and how might it be taken. Hughes is clear that for him it is the poem, this 'new species of creature'. He goes on to explain how for him the capture takes place:

How can a poem, for instance, walk about in the rain, be like an animal? Well perhaps it cannot look much like a giraffe or an emu or an octopus, or anything you might find in a menagerie. It is better to call it an assembly of living parts moved by a single spirit. The living parts are the words, the images, the rhythms. The spirit is the life which inhabits them when they all work together. It is impossible to say which comes first, parts or spirit. But if any of the parts are dead ... if any of the words, or images or rhythms do not jump to life as you read them ... then the creature is going to be maimed and the spirit sickly. So, as a poet, you have to make sure that all those parts over which you have control, the words and rhymes and images, are alive. (17)

But he also cautions, 'that is where the difficulties begin'. (17)

Before going on to look at the advice Hughes offers to try and overcome these difficulties, let us examine what he has just said. He suggests that a poem, like a creature, has a body and a spirit. He is unsure which comes first, but he is in no doubt that both exist. Only if both are vitalized by the work, quickened, will the creature, which is the poem, jump into life. What is intriguing here is that the work of creating the body of the poem and bringing it to life, is critically bound up with the body of the maker. Like de Saussure, Hughes is aware that his own bodily state, like that of the hunter, is crucial to the success of the venture. Only if he is animated will the poem be brought to life, the maker must first quicken himself before the poem can be discovered and in turn be made to work. I consider this to be like the preparation for a ritual or quest in which the participant spends time in vigil. The vigil would often take place during the night before the journey or event to be undertaken and the time spent was seen as essential for the body and mind of the protagonist to be prepared.

Last year I holidayed in southern Italy and made an evening visit to a mountain village where a week long festival was being held. The theme of the festival was the goat. Obviously goats were the staple activity of the village and the region and this festival was a celebration of that occupation. The whole village took part and each evening as the light faded torches and fires were lit. Temporary tents, *barracas*, had been

erected and goats were being roasted on huge braziers. There were stalls selling local produce and the smell of goat's cheese was everywhere. As we left about ten o'clock it was clear the drinking was beginning to take hold and the music was starting from the band in the small piazza in front of the church.

The visit affected me. I was agitated and unable to settle. I was aware of being frightened to some extent by the events. I thought of the New Year's Eve festival at Allendale in Northumberland, where I had lived for a time, and of the tar barrels which were carried in procession around the streets on the heads of the 'guysers' before being hurled onto a huge bonfire to set it alight. However, there was a different quality to the Italian evening. No doubt because of the otherness of a foreign country, the understandable strangeness of experiences in a foreign country, the holiday mood. Nevertheless the experience was physical. As I tried to sleep, images kept arriving and it was clear that whatever 'sensations of the heart' had been produced, they were going to prevent sleep. My response was to get up and write. Whether the poem which emerged as a draft in the early hours of that evening has any merit or not is less significant than the fact that it arose out of a distinct physical reaction to the experience. The mind is not excluded from such moments but the reverberation begins in the viscera. That evening had left me with a very clear physical aftermath.¹⁰⁷ I was struck by a sense of oppression and confinement. The small streets of the village were very narrow and had been pressed full of people. There was a closeness, an intimacy, which was unavoidable. Coming round one corner we were suddenly confronted by a carcass hung directly in front of us. It had been flayed and gutted and hung by its hocks upside down without a head. It was hanging at eye level and we were peering into its void. Although we left before the festivities were concluded, there was a tangible reverie to be felt. The poem which emerged, *Capra*, is an attempt to capture something of the quality of that evening.

Certainly by the time the poem had reached its fourth or fifth version the event was well in the past but each time I revisit the poem something of the felt experience remains. The poem also includes events which are imagined, as there was no direct evidence of a death or a sexual encounter having taken place.

Plato believed the poets could only write when they were out of their minds, in their *katokoche*. I believe in one sense, he was right. I experience the moment when I am urged to write, impelled to try and make something, as essentially physical. I am agitated and excited. I may resist, indeed, as I have said, I have for some time disallowed the full force of such moments. I have kept my heart quiet but there is no denying that in those initial moments there is a flutter. Valéry speaks of being offered a line, the given line. I believe that the line being offered is really a lifeline, your call to make something of your life. The artistic merit or otherwise, of what is made, is insignificant when weighed against the choice to make it in the first place. I keep a collection of the im-
tu which have offered themselves to me. I suddenly see a fresh significance in the one which goes; 'a rise of birds will break your heart'.

Several times it has been pointed out to me that I could say something in this thesis about the link between creativity and health. I am aware of my resistance but I have no hesitation in saying that I firmly believe there is a very strong connection between the two. My hesitation arises from the widely held belief, often disseminated through the self-help genre, that if only we can get in touch with our creative inner self then all will be well. I do not believe that such a causal equation exists. The factors which contribute to our psychosomatic health are complex, subtle, interdependent, and mysterious. I do know however that there is a peril in ignoring our potential for creativity and that if we choose to ignore it, then we will be less well than we might be.

Similarly if we ignore what we could do to create something we will live only a partial life.

Whilst hunting remains alive (typo for 'a live') metaphor, I recall two pieces of my own which are involved with the theme. What is interesting to me now is that one is a poem and the other prose and they take me back to a question from one of the very early drafts of this thesis in which I wondered what might be the essential differences between prose and poetry. The two pieces also raise a personal question for me as to how I write. The poem is called *The Last Hunt*.

The Last Hunt

He stood on the field edge, on a flat
beside the Sparrow Letch,
pushed on and out by our way through the wood.

He was an easy shot but stole away
unharmd and I folded my arms, content
to end with a miss.

At supervision in year two of this PhD I discussed about fifty or so poems which I had written over the last ten to twelve years. After this process, which I recall took up many hours, I realized that many of these poems would be sidelined, some might be abandoned altogether. *The Last Hunt* was to be one of those. What the supervision enabled me to realize was that much of what I had been writing were not poems at all, but simply ideas expressed in a way which might be vaguely described as poetical, in so much as lines were employed and a certain halting attempt at some musical quality. The poems of this phase tended to be short, and whilst this is no vice, it became clear that actually they were not so much short, as inadequate.

The basic idea for *The Last Hunt* remains valid. A roebuck got away from me. I was proud of my stalking, particularly being able to place my shot where it matters. My ability had enabled me to win the award as the best stalker in the region at competition.

After this miss I decide to stop deer stalking for good. There is potential here for a poem but what I wrote is little more than a musing upon an idea. Also there is another reason why the poem fails. I had in mind a promise I had made to myself when I attended the birth of my son. I said I would give up hunting. In the face of his birth, killing seemed an unjustifiable pastime. It would be seven years, until the particular episode mentioned in the poem, before I kept that promise. In many ways this is what the poem was about but there is no hint whatsoever of this in the scanty lines that were written. In his introduction to *Writing Poems*, Peter Sansom says “My main preoccupation in this book is with writing authentically. I mean by this *saying genuinely what you genuinely need to say*.” I missed not only the deer but the point of the poem. In an attempt to keep my heart steady, I did not risk putting my true feeling into the poem and it performs poorly as a result. Naturally there might be an argument to say I could not have done differently at the time but what interests me is how my body was unprepared to partake in the risk involved.

On the other hand *Brother Hare* seems to be a more successful enterprise. I encounter a hare when out walking one Sunday. Instead of choosing to try a poem however, this time I wrote in prose. I wrote *Brother Hare* in two stages. The first part came shortly after the event itself, and the second part years later in response to an invitation to me from a workshop leader, after hearing the first part, to consider what the hare might have to say in response. There had been a discussion in the workshop about parallels with power and ownership especially in terms of post-colonial ideas and I was introduced to the phrase: ‘The subaltern speaks’ for the first time.

To me, the hare pieces [no pun intended] seem altogether more adequate and fit for purpose. Obviously they are longer but that alone does not make the difference. The tonal quality, the voice, the choice of a pretended dialogue seems to be suitable to carry

the idea of a meeting. Somehow a 'conversation', albeit one-sided in each piece, goes some way to establishing the notion of relationship. The quality which I wanted to convey it is that I (We) are intimately connected to the natural world and the creatures that we encounter. This has been a central belief in my life since I was small. Each of the three creatures featured in the poems and story; deer, hare and goat, are familiar to me. I have hunted, killed, gutted and eaten hare and deer and raised and fed on goat. Eviscerating a freshly killed animal puts you inside the body. Warm blood and guts become felt experiences. Although *Brother Hare* is not specifically about hunting as such, more about encounter, it seems to me to carry some of the intimacy which I believe is involved in any meeting between man and animal. Whether this has anything to do with the stockmanship which I witnessed as a child on the farm I can not know for sure, but certainly there was a closeness with animals at that time which I will never forget.¹⁰⁸ In prose I believe I have to a degree succeeded in finding a quality which carries the piece in a way which neither 'The last Hunt' or 'Capra' yet do.

This discussion is symptomatic of something I have experienced in my writing in recent times. Although I set out on the PhD as someone who saw himself trying to write poetry, I often find myself happier writing prose. For whatever reason I feel more content with the results of some of my prose attempts, whereas I am more often frustrated by attempts to render what I would like into poetry. Perhaps the whole experience of the PhD has served to let me become aware of writing in general, rather than simply enhancing my writing of poetry. Certainly in my own mind I would tend to think of myself now more as someone who tries to write rather than as an aspiring poet. I doubt that my love of poetry will cease. It has been life-long and I still find myself reading poems, some new and sometimes returning to familiar work. I attend two monthly poetry groups and intend to keep this up. I am repeating a year-long poetry masterclass which

is being offered again this coming year. Recently, I have felt that some of my poems have reached further than before. However it is clear I will also write more prose. I am seeking support and supervision for the prose work in a way I have never done before. I suddenly remember that I wrote stories as a child, but never showed them.

My curiosity over my own poetry and prose harks back to a general question which I raised in the drafts written early in this thesis: is there an intrinsic difference between poetry and prose? There is certainly something of a difference for me in the way I experience the process of trying to write in each way. Poetry remains something with which I know I am still struggling. On an atomic level there seems to be all the difference between writing a balanced sentence and a balanced line. By way of analogy I have always enjoyed whatever do-it-yourself work I have done which involves wood, even aspiring to making some rudimentary furniture. By contrast I recoil from working with metal. I seem to have a feeling for how wood behaves whilst I can never fathom what seems to me the cold inflexibility of metal. I manage to relate to wood, thinking this will work or this will not work because the grain is running the wrong way or whatever. No such relationship exists with metal. Perhaps the contrast is not quite so acute between the sentence and the line, but certainly there is an ease with prose which is not there with verse. Perhaps I am naïve in thinking that poets find it easy but it seems clear that some poets clearly have an attunement to writing, which if it does not come entirely naturally, then certainly is familiar to them. No doubt practice helps for I know that when I am writing more regularly or more intensely, say at a workshop, then something can emerge. Curiously, hearing the word attunement I am struck by the fact that most of the poets I know personally who seem to have what I describe as this ease with verse are often music lovers or singers or players in their own right.

Last year I was interested by an article by Tom Paulin in *The Guardian*, written about the exhibition entitled *The Spirit of the Age* being held at Dove Cottage to celebrate the work of William Hazlitt. Paulin at one point is describing the quality of Hazlitt's prose:

What Hazlitt wants to do in all his writing after his first philosophical work is to unite painting with journalism, so that his urgent, beautifully modulated prose has a glossy freshness and a living, active engagement, but wants his prose portraits not simply to be static, like oil paintings, and instead to be almost like film or action paintings.

Paulin takes the view that Hazlitt more than succeeded in the manner of his prose to achieve his desired aims. He quotes him speaking about Wordsworth:

His style is vernacular: he delivers household truths. He sees nothing loftier than human hopes, nothing deeper than the human heart. This he probes, this he tampers with, this he poises, with all its incalculable weight of thought and feeling, in his hands, and at the same time calms the throbbing pulses of his own heart by keeping his eye ever fixed on the face of nature.¹⁰⁹

Paulin goes on to suggest that Hazlitt, the critic, 'is given the same freedom as the imaginative writer and isn't simply a dependent explicator of a literary text, as the energy, freedom and grace of Hazlitt's prose so magnificently proclaims'. Hazlitt's prose, as Paulin concludes 'has a fresh tackiness like blood or oil paint' and clearly he feels it is suitable for the purpose for which Hazlitt intended, namely to 'give animation and movement to his profiles'. So is it possible to conjecture that one of the ways in which poetry and prose resemble each other, rather than differ, lies in the fact that both may be susceptible to the 'fitness for purpose' argument. It may be that there is not so much a fundamental difference between the two forms merely that one is more suited to a particular purpose than another. I recall David Constantine cautioning that all subjects however intriguing, interesting or moving to an aspiring poet may not be suitable material for a poem. If a subject calls to be written, is there another form in which it might come

to life, rather than verse? Perhaps the question for me becomes: in what manner does this piece call to be brought forth? In some instances this could be a poem, but in another a short story, another could be dialogue, another drama, and even a non-written form altogether. Here I am aware of a longstanding desire to make a moving image piece of work (working with a video camera is a fresh experience after a lifetime of still, mainly black and white, photography) and wondering whether this could be accompanied by words.

Also the whole question of differentiating prose from poetry, seems on one level, to be fraught. Here is Paulin again, quoting Hazlitt writing about Edmund Burke's counter-revolutionary prose:

It differs from poetry, as I conceive, like the chamois from the eagle; it climbs to almost equal height, touches upon a cloud, overlooks a precipice, is picturesque, sublime – but all the while, instead of soaring through the air, it stands upon a rocky cliff, clambers up by abrupt and intricate ways, and browses the roughest bark and crops the tender flower.

“On the Prose Style of Poets.” Guardian Review 10/4/04, 4-6.

This is high-octane prose in itself, trying to describe the quality of another prose style. Underlying, however, appears to be some confirmation of the ‘fitness for purpose’ or quality argument. The chamois, despite its agility and ability to leap, is an earthbound creature fit for the highest peaks, the most precipitous ledges, but unable, like the eagle, to take to the air. Both are magnificent in their own realm and perfectly suited to what they do. Is this ultimately where the distinction lies? Is poetry fit for some purposes and prose fit for others? Whilst I find this is a feasible argument it is clearly not comprehensive. A great deal of material can be adequately rendered into prose or into verse depending upon the skill of the practitioner. There are truly fine love poems and many great love stories, some elegies are effective in verse, but many funeral orations have been in prose. Pinned to the wall in front of the desk where I write there is a

cartoon. It shows a rather frenzied figure striding forward purposefully as though to break through a throng of watchers gathered at an unseen event. The caption reads:

Let me through – I'm a poet.

Pinned up by my partner as a fond mocking of the specialness sometimes claimed by the poet I wonder what impact would be achieved if the caption read instead; 'novelist', 'short-story writer', 'writer of articles', 'essayist'? Searching for an answer, I remember Rilke's advice to his young correspondent about the impossibility of some questions, and how to continue to live with the question until it gives up its own answer. However, behind this lighthearted question lies a serious enquiry: what is the status of the poet in society? The question lies well outside the scope of this thesis but it does reverberate with Plato's anxiety. I sense that when poetry is at its best, it disconcerts. I know that if I experience discomfort after reading or listening to a poem then there is often something valuable to be uncovered. For me, being disconcerted, is part of the pleasure of reading and listening.

I also know that whatever form I choose for my writing from now on I will need to risk my heart beating hard as well as keeping my window open.

Coda

Over this last August Bank Holiday I spent several days in my garden working on final amendments to the thesis. I had papers spread out on the table. The piles were held down with pebbles. They were glorious early autumn days with bright sunshine and the garden seemed just the right place to be.

The visits of the butterflies came as an extra delight. I was well aware that we enjoyed an abundance of them because of three huge buddleias which were in flower. However I was not prepared for their boldness or intimacy. They flew right onto the table and settled upon the pages. I wondered if they were drawn by the bright reflection of the paper.

There were Large Whites, Red Admirals, Wall Browns, Painted Ladies, Tortoiseshells, and when a Comma settled I could not help smiling at the thought that it was here to carry out a final check on my notoriously poor punctuation. If I sat still they were untroubled, only flying off if I stirred.

However one moment stood out. A Peacock landed very close indeed as I was leaning over writing. Most species of butterfly are beautiful but the Peacock is exquisite with its mainly russet wings with added blacks, browns, yellows and whites. The powder blue of its 'eyes' at the tips of the wings adds an oriental note. This particular creature was so close I could see the fine hairs on its body and wings. It was a velvet down and seemed to call out to be stroked so gorgeous was the texture. As I watched it raised itself up upon its legs so that it became rampant, with its head high and its body angling downwards. Then it unfurled its two coiled feelers which stood out like antlers.

I imagined this delicate Peacock as some mythical beast, standing proud and trumpeting a fanfare to the world. Somehow this tiny, almost weightless being had transformed itself in my imagination so that I was seeing images of huge ancient stone sculptures of fantastical creatures from Persia, Assyria, Egypt. I was taken both back and aback by the effect of this close up encounter with what the Greeks had chosen as their symbol of the soul, the butterfly.

I became animated, transfixed by the image, the visceral effect was palpable and I remembered that the image in the Heaney poem which I had heard in Edinburgh, and which had so affected me, had been of a butterfly rising in flight.

PART TWO

Blood Stories

‘Jowl, jowl and listen lad’

1. Down there things were very different.

Each time a shift of men went down a reaction began. As the cage was lowered the men gradually fell silent. One man felt inside his shirt and pulling out a talisman he kissed it quietly. Some crossed themselves. They descended. The miners were entering ritual space. Not only going down into the body of the earth but each one letting himself down into his own body, to settle himself. Every miner knew mining was dangerous. Each family, each community knew the stories of the disasters and each man carried the fear in his blood. No one spoke of their being afraid, there was no need.

Hundreds of men went down for thousands of shifts over years and years, millions of man-hours, and every man afraid. Fear poured into the earth to scour into the corners. It was fear which led the psyche on. Down, and into the veins, to draw out the coal which would set fire to the world above. Every miner was an alchemist. Carbonised vegetable matter was hauled out of the earth and when burned in the furnaces above it made gold for the pit owners, the coal barons. This was the process of transformation man had sought for throughout the ages; the search to transform something base and worthless into something fine and valuable. The miners went into the dark and brought forth the means of making light.

The coal mining industry was one huge operation carried out on the body of the earth. The veins deep in the cavities were stripped of their black blood. There was no transfusion however, for nothing was placed in the void. The gap was where the miner

worked. These underground wizards brought forth the raw material which fuelled the spell we called progress. And all the time they worked in fear. The sweat of their work masked the smell, but each body moved in its own mist, each figure in its own fog of fear.

Young boys, many with mining fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers, expected to go down the pit. Often there was no other choice. These boys would do various jobs underground before becoming hewers, usually around the age of twenty. The hewer was the one who actually dug the coal from the face and once promoted he would then settle into a rhythm which would carry him through his working life. One week on the fore shift from four in the morning till ten, alternating with a week on the back shift from ten till four. If he was on the fore shift he would chalk the number three on his door so the ‘caller’ or ‘knocker up’ would wake him.

Six days a week for the next fifty years the only movement might have been from one colliery village to another. Whole communities span round the axis provided by the shifts. Rows of terraced houses disgorged men to go down and received men coming up. The sounds of the sirens, the whirring of the pit-head wheel all to produce the fuel to keep the very engine of society itself turning. And all the time the fear. Every man and boy taking his bait tin, his lamp, and his ration of fear, into the earth. Carried in his blood, the fear never left, it just pulsed, waiting and listening.

This was the world of James Halliday, born on the 27th March 1885, into a coalmining family. His father Stephen was a coal miner and had just moved from Tudhoe colliery to Browney colliery, before James was born. His grandfather James had been a colliery on setter and a coke works labourer, but he seems to have been the first of the miners in the family, because his father John had been a tallow chandler from Whitehaven. School records from Browney show that James started school on the third

of March 1890 a few weeks short of his fifth birthday. His education at Browney stopped when he was nine. He left school on the 20th July 1894. He may have attended another school afterwards but more likely he began work in the mines. Aged nine, he may well have been a “trapper”:

They are the youngest boys employed in the mine. They are stationed at traps or doors in various parts of the pit, which they have to open and close again, as a means of directing the current of air for ventilation to follow certain prescribed channels. It was formerly the practice to send boys of not more than six years to work in the mine as trappers. They remained in the pit for eighteen hours every day, and received five pence a day each as wages. He was in solitude and total darkness the whole time he was in the mine, except when a tram was passing. He went to his labour at two o'clock in the morning, so that during the greater part of the year it was literally true that he did not see daylight from one Sunday till the Saturday following'.²

By the time young James started work, shifts had been reduced to twelve hours in some places and to eight in others. James no doubt would have expected to become a miner.

At some stage he would have worked his way up to become a hewer, the miner who cut the coal from the face. If he was on a fore shift he would rise at three in the morning, wakened by the call of the knocker up, he would go to the window and show he was up, and then ‘take[s] a piece of bread and water, or a cup of coffee, but never a full meal. Many prefer to go to work fasting. With a tin bottle full of cold water or tea, a piece of bread, which is called his bait, his Davy lamp and “baccy box” he says good bye to his wife’.

James would eventually arrive at the seam where he was working and he would begin his work by ‘hewing out about fifteen inches of the lower part of the coal. He thus undermined it, and this process was called kirving. The same was done up the sides and

² .“General Mining History/Mining History/Ventilation-including descriptions of the various occupations”. Durham Mining Museum Archives, <http://www.dmm.org.uk> [accessed 14 September 2004]. All following quotations, including the words of the song, are from this source.

this was called nicking. The coal thus hewn was called small coal, and that which remained between the kirve and the nicks was known as the jud or the top. The jud was displaced either by driving in wedges, or was blasted down with gunpowder. It then became the roundy. The hewer [James] filled his tubs, and continued thus alternately hewing and filling’.

Jowl, jowl and listen lad
Ye’ll hear the coalface working
There’s many a marrer missing lad
Because he wadn’t listen lad

Jowl: to strike the coal-face, with a pick or hammer.

Marrer: mate, friend, working companion.

James no doubt was a good miner, and good miners became good listeners. They listened in the heart of the earth to the movement of the earth. Their blood carried as a monitor, attuned to coalface’s working. The miner worked the coalface and all the time the coalface worked, shifting, easing, settling, groaning. James became an underground sculptor. His face to the coal-face he undermined the face he faced, he displaced and replaced the disintegrated face with another from behind. He made solid into pieces, small coal and roundy. Round and round for a lifetime, shift by shift and all the time he listened:

Me Father always used to say
Pit work’s more than hewing
You’ve got to coax the coal along
And not be riving and chewing

The deputy crawls from flat to flat
The putter rams the chummins
And the man at the face must kna his place
Like a mother kna’s her young un.

Putter: the worker, often a boy, who moved the loaded carts to the flat area where they were hooked up to the winch.

Chummins: the empty coal carts which would speed back down the rails to be filled.

There in the bowels of the earth James worked with men who sweated and hewed and became mothers. Like mothers they learned to get to know the face in front of them. By listening, watching, attending they grew to learn the moods of the face. They responded to different conditions. Knew when to be hard and when they needed to come at the work more carefully. They sensed when a wet face might have water backed up behind it. When a soft yielding face might give way to slurry. When a clean bright face might be brittle and fall at once, with deadly weight. When a face with tight strait grain could stand alone and when a skewed face needed extra support.

Miners didn't just work at the face they worked with the face. They relied on their senses. Their eyes watched for any slight shift, any slippage, any movement, their noses sniffed for gas, for damp, for brimstone that might produce a spark. Through the dust and the tobacco they chewed, they could taste when the air grew foul. Through the shafts of their picks and hammers they felt for pitch and tone. Sometimes a ringing, sharp as bell, sometimes a flat bass note taking a while to fade. And down there in the slot, they sweated and anointed themselves in the black oil of the earth. They strained and rolled like lovers might, and for their life's sake they listened. To the groaning of the face, to the easing of the prop, to the tension in the cables, to the far away rise and fall of the cage in the shaft, and all the time below all of this, they listened to the breathing of their marrer, working alongside them.

2 The Hearth.

Grandfather sat on the left. His bulldog occupied the rag mat lying directly in front of the flames. The dog was always too hot, panting, overweight and short of breath. On the right was a chair for Grandma when she came in from the kitchen for a moment or two. She would sit on the edge of the seat worrying a tea towel or duster between her hands then unsettled, rise, and return behind the kitchen door. The fireplace was tiled in a patchwork. Three shades of brown. Not like the old ranges there was no way of cooking but a concession of one small hob allowed a black kettle to purr on the side. On the mantelpiece stood only one item. A small bronze plaque mounted on dark wood. It had an embossment of a pit-head and was inscribed with the year 1946. The name engraved on it was the same as my own name, an uncle, granddad's youngest son John, killed by the colliery engine when it struck the timber he was carrying on his shoulder as he crossed the railway line, spinning him round like top, and breaking his neck. He was twenty.

When grandfather wasn't chewing tobacco he was smoking it. Using the smaller blade of his penknife he would pare away a couple of slices of War Horse. Shredded between the balls of his thumbs he would pack the bowl and set it alight using a home made spill; a thin sliver of wood a by-product from the kindling he would chop to light the fire. Once in a while, before folding away the knife, he would spit on the blade and then draw it over the edge of a hearth tile where a groove had grown out of the process. Lastly he would finish the edge on the thigh of his trousers. One downward stroke sweeping away from the body and one upward stroke swinging back towards the groin. Granddad said this final action was essential to produce the sharpest of edges.

Fifty years of coal dust and a smoking habit on top had given granddad every right to cough. When he did it sounded like the deep bowels of the earth were turning over in some thick mucous quagmire. Then he would hawk, hauling from deep inside himself a great gob of phlegm which he would spit into the coals with uncanny accuracy. This was deep mining, drawing up from within himself residues of coal laid down over the years.

His spittle, an amalgam of coal dust, coal tar, tobacco tar and disintegrating lungs would crack and cackle in the fire as the heat of the coal took back its own in a bubbling inferno. Coal dust collected in his lungs had mixed into a lethal paste which would never be expectorated. The black powder had fallen like snow for a working lifetime and the drifts were slowly closing down his life. Many men would die like him, of the lung. Slowly strangled by what they had worked for. Others hawked what was left of their lives into fireplaces just like him. Burning the free coal which was their pension, the fire hot enough to sear away each great gobfull spat into its centre. The evidence burned away. The wound to the man and to society itself, cauterized, sealed over, unspoken. Each man waiting in fear; breathless, speechless. Each one listening out for his next breath.

Lott the Wife.

I always thought I knew all four of my grandparents even though my grandfather Jont had died a couple of years before I was born. However as the years went by I began to realise from the odd comment here and there that things were not as I thought them to be. The grandmother whom I had always assumed to be my father's mother, was not. The quiet, plump little figure who would give us tea on our Sunday visits, and always gave me a 'happle' and a 'horange' to take home, was my grandfather's second wife. Dad's Mum had died in 1940 and grandfather felt a woman to be needed around the house as John his youngest son was, at that time, only 14. All I know is that 'grandma' was a Lott. Her step-mothering of John was only to last six years. John was killed at work, aged twenty, when he was struck by the colliery engine as he crossed the tracks carrying a large timber beam on his shoulder. He had crossed over safely but the plank was caught by the train, he was spun round, and his neck was broken. My father, not long back from the war, went to identify his body.

So my grandmother becomes an absence. I do not recall my father ever mentioning his mother. I know she was an Adair but I have no idea how old she was when she died, or of what. I now realize that the woman looking back at me from my parents' wedding photograph was not my grandmother. She had died the year before they were married.

Of course I could ask Dad to fill in the details. What was your Mum like? Do you have a photograph of her? I could reconstruct some of the facts but what would I end up knowing. What impact if any would the knowledge have upon me at this stage. At ninety years of age what would Dad himself recall of a mother sixty years dead. Was he fond of her and she of him? Knowing my father as I do, what might I be able to guess

about how he was mothered? What about Dad's two brother's Tom and John, what would they have said about their mother?

There are always gaps in families. Spaces created by events, deaths, illnesses, marriages, leavings. My Uncle Tom left home to be a footballer and played professionally for Norwich before the war, as a 'tough centre-half'. Grandfather, a strict Methodist and teetotaler, did not approve of Tom's lifestyle and he was not encouraged to visit home. However as a child I have a memory of someone at granddad's house who had a cigarette rolling machine. Sitting on his knee at the table with this fascinating little toy, he showed me how to roll his cigarettes. I have always believed I was with my Uncle Tom. This must have been the early 1950's and maybe it was not Tom for there was never any mention of him in the family and father only got to know of his fate when he found out he had died after many years of never seeing him. Perhaps it was Tom on an infrequent home visit.

Earlier this year, my father received a letter out of the blue from someone asking if he was the brother of Tom Halliday who had played for Norwich before the war and that if he was, then the writer was his niece. This lady, born out of wedlock, and now in her sixties, had recently traced her father and discovered he was Tom. She was pursuing possible family connections. So Tom had fathered a child, sometime in the forties. Did he even know he was a father? Certainly my father knew nothing of the fact that he had a niece. I realised I needed to add an equals sign opposite Tom's name on the family tree, and a vertical line for the offspring. I have no name for the mother, just Anne for the daughter. This was a gap filled when I had not known that a gap even existed. I did not become aware until later that I was drawing a line down to someone who was related to me, as well as to my father, a cousin of mine in fact. As much a cousin as the child of my

mother's sister whom I have known since I was small and believed to be my only relative of the same generation. I may never meet this newly found relation.

What other lines which have been drawn on that family tree are incomplete or tell only a part of a story? If, as seems probable, my only child Jonathan, does not choose to have children, then this unmet cousin may hold the key to the Halliday bloodline. Does she have children I wonder? What would it do for me to know? Does the body of work which is this questioning memoir require me to know? Am I obliged to enquire? Does the work call for this hiatus to be closed, the lacuna filled? Something has come up and the trail is still warm. Should this quarry be pursued? As a maker am I required to make something of all this newly found knowledge? Does Anne's questioning deserve a response from me? Do I write this line or do I choose another line? By choosing one way rather than another, do I discharge the contract there is between myself and the memoir, or do I fail? Am I even sure what were the terms of the engagement I made when I began? Was I sure of what I was doing, clear in my mind of the purpose and direction of the desire to make a history. Was the trajectory plotted and the point of arrival estimated? What effect does the new knowledge have upon the project? Have I lost sight altogether of what the project is meant to be? Is it possible, necessary or desirable to pause and renegotiate the terms. Do I try to impose an order upon the work or seek to respond to how it is hinting to me that it wishes to develop? Would I know which, except by listening to the response of my own body to the choices I make. Am I making this memoir or is it making me?

The absence of my true grandmother has led to another absence. An unmet woman, Anne, with a story to tell, no doubt. Is that story relevant to what it is I am trying to do or a side road leading somewhere it is not necessary for me to go? The fact is I never knew my grandmother. Whatever traces of her life affect my own come to me

through unseen episodes between her, her family, and especially, those between her and my father. Her mothering of him will have contributed to how he lived and fathered me. The detail of how this worked is unknown, and unknowable, in the usual sense of how we use those words. However if Yeats is right when he says we can embody truth but not know it, then it is to my body that I must turn. When I do this, I find myself saying that I believe my grandmother must have been a kind soul. From somewhere my father learned his kindness and it is the felt kind of kindness, which comes only from an innate sense of self. It is the kind which I sense is imparted only from being loved by your own kind, the sort that allows you to love in turn.

Brother Hare

Part One. The Encounter.

Is that you? Lying there facing the wind so your laid back fur does not ruffle, rise to give you away. I'm pretty sure it is you but often when we meet there is an element of uncertainty, mystery. Now that I have moved along the road a few yards and found a gate to rest my arms upon my binoculars are steadier. There is a clue. Half way along what could be your back there are two small triangular black patches. These are the tips of your ears. You cannot hide them. And yet I'm still going through that process of weighing up all the evidence.

You could still be a clod of earth, a rough stone thrown up by this year's plough, a scrap of manure spewed from the muck spreader. I've fallen for that one before. And yet I cannot walk on by. Even if it is just a possibility, more likely a probability it is you, I owe it to you to make our meeting.

I am no longer as attuned as I would have been all those years ago when you were my quarry. Now it seems more that we meet as equals. I no longer need to remember all I did all those years ago. Do you recall that day on the slope behind Smith Shield. I was on my way home in the snow and all I caught in the moment were your ears going down, flat to your back. I laid on the ground and used my scope. No doubt it was you but no shot either as just the dome of your skull showed. Either you or I would have to make the first move. Forty five minutes later I'd become a small drift, a hummock grown out of the snow. I was beginning to freeze and you hadn't wavered. The light was going and I thought enough was enough. This would be a draw. And then you looked up and I went in through your left eye.

Today so much is altered. I climb the gate knowing that you will see me. Before I would have considered the terrain trying to find an approach from behind. Knowing

your eyes sit high and back on your head and that you see almost all round I would have looked for the ideal line to come at you from behind along the line of your spine, perhaps your only weakness.

So different now I only make a small arc and anyway it's a flat field of winter wheat without an ounce of cover for either of us, so pretence is useless. I close to about six feet or so and you drop even further, that last possible flattening but in the moment I know for sure it is you. No stone, no cut in the earth, no upturned clod, no tangle of manure can make this gesture. For a moment I stop, knowing we both know that now it is simply a matter of time and space.

I have chosen to come at you head on. Matador to bull there is no longer any play. I can now make out your detail. Your haunches bunch ready. They are huge like coiled springs ready to let you go, those bony ridges above your eyes and the dome of your hard head. Perspective is strange. I am now close enough to be looking down on you from a few feet. I see into your amber eyes.

Where is the line? I know I cannot touch you just yet, just out of reach, not much more than arm's length. I stop. For some strange reason I wonder if you are alive. Are you hurt, shot or wounded? Or simply old. I know this cannot go on and yet we are obliged to play out whatever this Sunday meeting holds for us. I take half a step and it is enough.

In the explosion I cannot say whether you whirled over your left shoulder or right but predictably you go away up the slight incline using those huge haunches to your advantage. Do not worry I will not pursue, but I will watch you go. You have burst into life. The dull grey heap you pretended has suddenly excited form, gorgeous golden flanks and a soft white underbelly. And on top those preposterous ears held high like banners. Huge standards you carry to the safety of the wood in front.

There would have been a time when I would have felt cheated by your escape. Today I wonder what image of me you carry, reflected at the back of your eye.

Part Two. The Subaltern Speaks.

Since you ask we will answer. Yes we. For we have been watching you longer than you know. And we speak of you at the crossings, where paths make the sign of the 'X' or the 'Y', sometimes on the wood edges, sometimes at the gatherings. Do not think you are special though. We speak of others too. But we have watched you grow. From your young days when you were learning we watched you walk those fields of your grandparent's farm. Then you never saw us. We ran rings round you and there was no dawning in your eye. Whatever it was that you were seeing then, it was not us. For many years we lost sight of you until you returned to our land with your woman. We named you Strutter. My God you were arrogant. You carried death around with you and you spat it out like your old men spit in the gutters. You were not the first to bring your anger to us. We became aware in the time before what you call history that you people do not always understand what you do. You are unwise in the way of your own hearts and this makes our judgments all the harder. When you took away that one of us in the snow, with that shot to his eye, there were those among us who called for the curse. There were others who said we should wait and anyway you had eaten him and sent his spirit on.

We could not overlook the mother however. You remember she was unusually light in colour and when you opened her up you found her milk. It was only the sigh that we heard from you that saved you. But we had to carry out a punishment. For the sake of her orphans and all the orphans you invaders leave. You could not be allowed to go

on like that. You had crossed the line. When we choose one of us to act you can never know her name. But she was the one who laid in wait in the field below Brown Rigg that day when you were in the Land Rover with your pregnant woman. You reached for your rifle and in haste the shot went off past her belly and through the side of the vehicle narrowly missing your unborn child. That shudder that you feel every time you remember was our present to you.

The council received a report on you last year from our Low Quarter brigade. They run out of Hexhamshire where you and your new woman love to walk in the evenings. Where you saw the great white barn owl and the cuckoo on its post. You have noticed that we like it there. That evening when you counted twelve of us we put on a special show for you. Yes we know you want to film us and we have decided that you should be our ambassador to your people. You do not know much but the little that you do know is worth others trying to learn.

Just in case though we sent you a reminder the other night. Coming over the shoulder of the fell from Carrshield you killed one of our young bucks with your car. Yes we know you couldn't avoid him and that you went back to check he was finished. You could have lifted him to the verge but he had broken our blood rule and perhaps he deserved to lie out there in the open, to be ground down. Using you in that way and on a Sunday. Just our gentle reminder.

Oh by the way, that one in the snow, you were not so clever after all. The reason you were able to get that shot was because he was partially sighted in his left eye, just like you.

Note:

Subaltern: A genus that is at the same time a species of a higher genus. (O.E.D. A.1.b)

Poetry

1

Blood Story

After the chores
after the supper
after the clearing away
but before the prayers

the settee, large like a siege engine
is hauled closer to the range
and grandmother begins

after the chores
after the supper
after the clearing away
but before the prayers

to tell of the buried bones
behind the breast
that stares back at us, listening

to tell of how the buried bones
will on some night

after the chores
after the supper
after the clearing away
but before the prayers

to whisper of how the bones

This is your first blood story.

Primroseside Farm

Then, these meadows, summits, and slopes
contained, all days, all dreams, all hopes.

My seven league boots quickly
eat up the farming fields of childhood.
The oak for climbing has gone, its sandy base
too soft to hold the tipping trunk.
I learned my hunting here, imagined creatures
brought down by ever accurate, home-made bows.

Later I substituted a crude rifle,
and entered their hearts, without knocking.

The Heritage Museum

When I was a nipper Doctor Wilson held surgery
in his house a few doors along from us.
Transported, stone by numbered stone, and rebuilt,
it's in a Heritage Museum now.

When I visited I was angry and thought,
'History! - But I'm not dead yet'.

There were men dressed as miners, playing quoits,
'Made from pit ponies' horseshoes' the guide said.
My grandfather was a miner, and a quoits champion.
He would sit by the fireside, chewing War Horse.

He would cough and spit
his black gobbet of phlegm and dust
into the coals. It would sizzle and hiss,
before evaporating.

I was sitting in the old pub's, 'Ale House Bar',
all themed, with the sunbeams slanting,
when a painting fell from its hook,
striking a woman on the head.

In slow motion she fell forward,
her daughter screamed
as her mother's blood
flowed along the flagged floor.

The Corner Shop

Is a magnet, with the power
to suck people from the places
they call home.

Its tiny space means sudden intimacy,
three and you're crowded,
four, almost lovers.

Before the shopkeeper and the congregation,
you declare your deepest desires,
offer up your longing for public hearing.

"A Fry's chocolate cream,
a Crunchie,
and a bag of Minstrels please".

No place to hide,
now you're out there, naked,
exposed, a body on a slab.

You pocket your change, sidle out,
'Excuse me' ... 'Cheers',
clutching your contraband.

Cradle

On his palms the carpenter has tattooed hearts,
etched on The Plain of Mars.

You want to shake his hand, to clasp
one of these hearts.

Every tool he uses, every piece he makes,
bears traces of his hearts.

When he hoists his son aloft
he soars between hearts.

He play pretends to drop him, catching him,
close to the ground, cradled by his hearts.

Centipede

The centipede is practising punctuation,
jet black on the bright white wall,
like ink on paper it begins as a dash,
read unconsciously from left to right.

Overnight it rests as an opening half quote.
Unable to detach a small part of itself for the stop,
it can only manage the top part of a question mark.
The ampersand is beyond its reach,
it settles for a forward slash.

All these contortions, commas, apostrophes,
turnings and turnings are like a dog,
fussing to settle its bed.

It is September, and the gyrations are a preparation
for its winter's rest, finally choosing
a tightly curled spiral,
looking from a distance, like a full stop.

On the other wall, over there,
I see a Gecko with a rubber tongue,
eraser at the ready.

Giacomo

Outside, you and I play scrabble, and Giacomo sits on your left.
He is the son of our hosts,
Gerardo, Superintendent of Carabinieri,
and Donatella, his wife.

Giacomo is called after his grandfather,
and Gerardo says his grandson will be called after him,
because this is the way it has always been.
Donatella has no say.

You find the right letters,
making and saying his name:
G-I-A-C-O-M-O
'Mi chiamo Clare'

To amuse him you score in Italian:
Uno, due, tre, quattro, cinque;
dieci, for your 'trust', on a double word,
crossing with my 'cloud'.

Giacomo has sleek curls over dreamy eyes,
he has a quiet way about him,
he unfurls his smiles, slowly, setting
sparks away in your heart.

We know, despite this earthly appearance,
that Giacomo, aged four, is an angel,
this family, simply a cover story:
he is already as handsome as hell.

He is silent, watching, sleepy,
he wobbles indoors on tired legs.
From inside come the voices,
he is counting with his father.

Valete

Six tuxedoed heroes and one frocked blonde
attend the end of school bash
at the local Italian.

These magnificent seven
will sharp-shoot their way through the world,
pomp and arrogance as ammunition.

The headwaiter, disdainful and aquiline,
has more class in the bend of his beak
than this nest of fledglings.

He hovers, taking orders, as if
plucking eyes from faces,
puffed soft by candlelight.

The mason has made no mark.
These alabaster cheeks
yet to be stamped.

Older eaters ache for their time again.
Wishing to etch bland flesh,
using spears of porcelain.

The Last Hunt

The buck stood on the field edge, on a flat patch,
beside the Sparrow Letch,
pushed on ahead by my stalking through the wood.

He was an easy shot but he stole away
unharm'd, and I folded my arms
content to end with a miss.

Feathers

Eros's arrow is barbed and always finds the heart.
Any attempt to pull it out will prove fatal.

Instead, find something hard in front and go forward,
pushing hard against the nock.

The head will cut through and come out by your left shoulder blade,
and the feathers, following, will dress the wound.

Blue

‘Walk with me on Sunday’ was my first invite.
Spiteful sand in a crosswind, whipped our cheeks ruddy.

Above the tilting cliff-top graveyard,
yellowhammers sang from the blue.

Uplifting larks held us both in thrall.
In marble, the names of the dead.

Walking became us, never close and often quiet,
I would watch, a witness to your untold thought.

Unseen, the old sea-woman
read the omen stones.

In dipping evening by the homecoming stream,
You pointed once, and whispering said:

Look!

Too fast for shape, blue, kingfisher blue,
blinded the back of my eye.

Vicissitudes

1 Attention Seeking

I'll lie down.
I'll surrender.
I'll let you suck out my eyes,
siphon off my heart,
break my bones,
let your pagan hordes
occupy the center of my soul.
Why?
because I love you,
and I love the attention.

2 Assault

You opened me up
just rode in
broke the doorways
pleased yourself
razed the buildings
left black rafters
hissing in the rain.

3 Cheat

If you're going to cheat on me,
and break my heart, be brazen about it,
employ trumpets, tambourines and trombones.

Cry out,
'He shags me like a horse and
makes me dizzy!'

Do not say,
'I'm confused and I need space'-
it insults us both.

4 Revenge

I'm going to make a dead walnut of your soul,
small, compacted, shriveled and dry.

Why?

Because I ride the horse of righteousness,
because I can,
because you hurt me with your lie.

Autumn In Inveruie Gardens

The gardener said there had been no wind for eight weeks.
Two Japanese maples blazed, blood red and yellowhammer.

The sun shot his light from a ridiculously blue sky,
whilst we cuddled in shadows of pomegranate and canary.

We parted and now dream of this,
the trees are leafless and forget our kiss.

The Separated Son

I see him through the doorway doing the washing up,
his new haircut makes him look girlish from the back.

I am not familiar enough with his shape
to acquaint at just a glance.

He is not here often enough.
I do not know him that way.

Soon he will be eighteen.

Accounting

When he was a child he spoke as a child.
When he became a man he carried on.

He had lived too many events unresolved,
he was unable and unwilling to grow, he was
gripped by perceived injustices.

Later real losses mounted in his debit column:

His wife through divorce.
His son through separation.
A lover through lies.
His friend through cancer.
Another by suicide.
His mother too quickly.
His father by age.

By balancing the books, and out of dumbness,
his voice broke.

Alligatormania

He is not just for Christmas,
submerged in your bath, he is
not greedy, simply in possession.

Serving a Notice to Quit is useless,
he simply shreds the writ.
Just throw in another sheep,
the dog stolen from her at number three.

You try reading to him,
politics causes drowsiness,
sport exacerbates.

You are obsessed: Ahab to his Whale,
every moment he is your centre of gravity.
You give him a name, 'Alcibiades',
the great betrayer - 'Al' for short.

When he takes off your left hand
neatly at the wrist, you blame yourself.
You tried stroking, whilst reading a new book,
too many changes all at once.

You have built a second bathroom in the garage.
You relinquish title to the first floor,
access to your train set in the attic is denied.

When your wife leaves, calling you mad,
you sell your children (safer in the long run),
and decide to move to the Balkans.

Whilst you fly over the Carpathians
he has already eaten half of the street.
He is eyeing the Methodist Chapel.

Portrait

When Domenikos Theotokopolous
painted the portrait of his friend, the poet
he had no idea the effect it would have.

When Fray Hortensio Felix Paravicino,
left alone in the studio, drew off the sheet,
he staggered backwards amazed.

His soul took flight from his body,
hovering between the two of them,
no longer sure of its true home.

Upon Reflection

All parts were mine,
recognizable as having come with me,
the lines traceable, their story discernible,
though a paragraph was missing, here and there.

The eyes, however, were new,
not yet settled down, not yet bedded in,
still wary, still afraid,
still playing catch up.

.

Proposal

Let us both:

I

Build a temple to our love.
Tear down trees for turrets.

Bend branches for barrel vaults.
Leave holes to let the angels peep.

Dance down soil for a firm floor.
Kneel and make hard promises.

Utter profane vows.
Tell terrible truths.

See behind each other's eye.
Roll in the rain.

Put an ear to the mouth.
Hear an ocean sigh.

II

Weave two rope and wooden swings to sway upon.
Eat each other with irrational and irregular teeth.

Whisper promises, preposterous and lovely.
Let go doves.

Wear feather earrings from gaudy parrots.
Braid our hair with ribbons, bells and bows.

Have the goddess of dressmakers sew your dress
from morning mists shot through with sighs.

Exchange bouquets of bluebells.
Bow to each other beneath cascades of poppies.

Burn sheaves of herbs.
Swing musk in the censer.

III

Do all these things in front of friends,
so they will say, 'I was at such a wedding day'.

Not sign but brush our bloodied thumbs
upon each others brow.

Wear kingfisher blue.
Slip away above still water.

Tesserae

Scrabble is what they do best,
just the two of them,
laying down the words,
each one dependent on the other.

Their crossings are as subtle as fingers,
her thigh using his loin
his weight on her belly.

Occasionally one breath is held,
as the other lays out seven letters,
emptying the tray,
and they both cry out.

.

The Man Who Shot Twelve Moons

1.

Beginning by the sea he catches
the twin lighthouses winking
at one another from the harbour's horns.

A hawk hovering, over dunes, appears
to be hunting the water.

She rises from the waves
but is coy, behind the clouds.

2.

In a churchyard where snowdrops quiver
by the graveyard wall, he shivers as
She rushes up the roof,
plays hide and seek through the bell-tower.

3.

In town She climbs above a Nescafé sign,
huge letters saying 'RISE SHINE'
he is tickled by Her humour.

4.

Already he has learned She rises
just after and directly opposite the setting sun.

He plays at being a pivot, holding
out his arms, one is pulled down by the sun,
as the other draws Her up.

At The Angel of the North, perspective casts Her
as a pebble behind his great steel heel.

5.

On a morning in May cows graze on the Town Moor,
this time She is setting, he turns on the hilltop
to see sunrise, beyond the still, shipyard cranes.

6.

Halfway through the year he chases Her down
in his car, She rushes ahead hurdling hawthorns
then lights two lines of beeches, ashy white.

7.

He stands on a the site of an old beacon
as She boils inside smoking clouds,
in the next field, hunters shoot by lamplight.

8.

On the Glorious Twelfth grouse rattle in the heather,
She is absent, unsettled by the gunfire.
Diana's nets and sickle knife would have been quiet.

9.

As he holidays, She dances
in the bottom of a Spanish pool,
plays around the eye of the mosaic porpoise.

10.

He visits the farm where he was born,
in the gloaming stands still,
as partridge land around him, stirring the air.

The white pony in the paddock is his unicorn.

In the city he watches Her
climb above the cathedral's towers.
Glowing among gothic clouds She
lights the Grand Opera set below.

An owl cries on cue.

11.

Among Long Meg's inconsistent circle of stones,
watching a sunset so arresting, he stumbles and falls.
She stays away. What would the old ones have said?

12.

Ending at the sea where he began,
She shines up, out of the sand,
an up-lighter dimmed by a wave, then bright again.
He turns for home, unaware of Her gleam on his collar.

Conversation

She chose to tell of parts of her life
we had not heard before.
Worrying her hankie between her hands,
sometimes her voice would lower
and her eyes would watch the door.

Her life was nearly full,
now she chose carefully how to use
the few remaining spaces,
knowing only so many times and places were left.
Her bones had done the counting.

Grandmother's Footsteps *

It is spring and we walk
to the top of our world.

You to listen for the curlew's cry,
the sound which will wind
your heart for another year.

Yes, they are here again,
your winged surveyors,
flying invisible grids,
acute diagonals always
bisecting angles, they never tire
of probing the earth, calling
strings of numbers to each other.

A snipe's away in front
rocking to avoid the unseen tracer.
A lapwing crumples, stalls,
regains control, pulling out
just before crashing.

I glance behind,
catching the halted flock,
playing at 'grandmother's footsteps'.
Traces of lanolin land on our skin,
awaiting night-time warmth,
enough to stir the oil.

Larks climb ladders, whistling,
working on their contract
maintaining the underside of heaven.

* A child's game where the adult faces away from the group who then tip-toe towards him or her. At any time the adult can turn round quickly to face the group and any child caught moving is 'out'.

The Blanket

I'm going to go to the country
and throw down the blanket my
mother made, quilted, quartered,
then on top the Indian bedcover,
saffron and ochre.

I'll chose a slight slope facing west,
maybe I'll set up some kind of altar,
but mainly I'm just going to sit,
sit and see what comes along,
up till now I've always made things happen,
so this time I'm just going to sit,
sit, and see what comes along,
sit, and see who comes along.

And when it's over, and I'm sitting watching the west
and the shadow reaches the hem of my blanket,
I shall stand, and roll up the layers
keeping pace with the deepening dark.
I shall go home, and lie down, and close my eyes,
lie down and close my eyes,
close my eyes, and know,

I have a blanket that rolls up the day and the night.
I have a blanket that holds in the dark and the light.

Second Earlies

Standing in your kitchen cupboard,
its blade is a wedge not a rectangle,
one edge worn down more than the other,
causing it to lean sideways.

I remember how you dug the earth,
with a quarter turn of your wrist
anticlockwise, always used the same corner
to slice through each sod.

We were planting potatoes.
You would dig and I would manure and place
the seed in the trench. You would say:
'Remember to point the eyes to the sky'.

The steel is shiny, polished with every thrust
into tilth, made fine by patient working.
The shaft too shines, where your left hand smoothed
the wood, every time you made that turn.

The handle is one of those which forks
making a 'U' with a top, not one like a 'T',
and on its shoulders like shiny epaulettes,
bright mounts holding it fast as new.

The blade, what's left of it,
is two and a half inches on the left
and four inches on the right,
angled like a guillotine, and just as sharp.

I tried a crop this year, in my new garden,
the first time for forty seven years;
Sante and Nadine, varieties of second earlies;
planting late and hurriedly, on St George's Day.

Poor yield, very poor, I had no manure and
the patch was bled by an old sycamore stump.
But they'll have cleaned the soil
and next spring, if you're still here,

though even blinder,
if you're still here,
if I take you by the arm,
help you where to stand, and put it in your hands.

The Spring Next Door

We found a spring
in the garden next door.

As neighbours we were digging down,
looking for a fault in a pipe perhaps,
but there it was, a pure source bubbling up.

By a series of home-made devices,
lifts and vessels, we had it running
through a pipe, just like a tap,
two thirds on, perhaps a little more.

It being the last day of November
we put down our spits and shovels
in the early dark.

Getting To Know You

The story goes that she who tended
you before, went about naked.
She hung an African mask
in the heart of your hedge.

She hammered iron stakes
into the roots of your shrubs,
to conduct the spark.
Her husband died; she left you two years since.

Neglect constricts you everywhere.
I will prune hard to free you,
let the air move around you, let you breathe,
allow you to shake your head.

I will hire the 'Just Stumps' man,
to grind away the roots
of the two sycamores she felled,
your cavity to be filled with topsoil.

Meanwhile, as I sit, I am held
by bee-sound, a soft hum.
I turn, hauled round
by the sun, becoming a heliotrope.

The magpie visits, like a slick enforcer,
demanding protection money,
taking a crying chick anyway,
as an example.

The mouse tumbles past,
upskittled by a large clod,
tickling my foot as
it somersaults along.

I come across a stone dragon,
hidden in one of your borders
and then uncover a stone frog,
calling, calling, for rain.

I have been learning your code:
the blind-stick tap-tap
is the thrush hammering the snail
open, on your paving.

But this is surface sound,
below, behind, under, there is your beat,

throbbing, you listen for the pulse
beyond yourself.

I bring outside a ripe pear,
which anoints my stubble.
Its core will sweeten your shade
where it is thrown.

Worms slip in your veins
and honeycomb your soil,
you breathe in elements,
iron wind and silver rain.

Flight

A pigeon lands on a branch which bends,
rocking its fluttering arrival.

A second bird comes too close, upsetting
the balance, both rise, squabbling.

They settle on separate perches,
one above the other.

Behind the larch on which they sway,
a rookery broods among the beeches.

High and dark, a death-star pricked
by flights of fighters, every angle covered.

A cock thrush struts the garden path,
chest out, waistcoat tight.

The blackbird chicks, nesting on the roadside wall,
reach out, agape for everything.

Summer in her fatness,
hurls herself at autumn.

Gordes

Below there are fires on the plain,
the year's leftovers offered up
in blue plumes.

The old god, roused by the rising pyre
answers with a cold wind
which blows for two days.

Il Pozzo

Beside the swimming pool is the old well,
after which the house is named.

A dark needle bored into the eye of the earth,
a counted pebble tells its tale,
glinting the surface as it lands.

Swifts, airborne undertakers, fly
between the people, interrupting
conversations, uplifting the corpses floating
on the pool, breaking surface tension,
ripples spread from each picking.

Beyond the olives, bamboos rustle,
in the dried up bed,
tricking the ear into hearing water.
Under stars that shudder
the curs are lying out, crying.
A wild boar is down from the mountain.

Capra *

'Barracas', temporary tents bedecked
with boughs fill the gaps between buildings,
inside their open flaps, braziers burn.

Every alley, kerb and niche,
gardens, some no bigger than blankets,
quiver with decorations.

The church is open, its doorway a slit.
Inside, the villagers deposit their consciences,
to be redeemed by a morning candle.

Tonight is otherwise.
Crowds pump through narrow lanes,
like blood through the body.

A man brushes past, pushing
his proud pewter moustache.
His goatherd stink swirls in his wake.

Tonight he wears a pointed gray felt hat,
a cock feather pricked into the brim,
in this hat, he mixes spells.

A ready girl goes behind a wall
with a quick youth. She has simmered
through the summer, she is bursting for him.

Men tip bottle bottoms to the sky,
the village is engorged, tonight's stars
will witness serious drunkenness.

Suddenly, on a corner, a carcass is hung
by its hocks, hollowed out
its neck ending with a stump.

In an upper room, an old man dies,
hunched, his forehead on the floor.
The women will unwind him, thread him down the stairs.

A boy, about seven, his toy drum
slung low on his thigh, struts,
beating time with his single stick.

* Capra is the Italian word for a goat.

A Fable

The smallest country in the world
is going out.
For some time there have been signs.
Surrounded by larger neighbours,
nibbling at her, greedy for a larger bite
of her minerals, and of course,
her warm-water port.

But it is the internal organs
which are causing most concern.
The Royal House has only one member left.
He is impotent.
The two remaining politicians
are identical twins and never argue.
The three policemen have retired
and are building a three-seater cycle
to travel abroad.

Most seriously the statue
in Capital Square has fallen down.
This titular spirit, this totem,
this bronze animal, now lies
on the cobbles.
One limb has broken free,
a gash opens behind the ear,
ends in the chest.
The talons are empty.
The prey remains on the pedestal.

The priest, shuffling to conduct an empty mass,
is the first to notice, his shrug
not even half-hearted,
all is inevitable.

The last child to be born, four hours ago,
in the second city, 'Standalone',
population now twenty three,
will be adopted by a foreign couple
who have learned five words of its language:
Mother, Father, Hello, Eat,
and the name of the creature
that lies in the square.

The 8.40 to Edinburgh

Outside the window
sheep move,
leaves curl at their edges,
cattle graze.

In the newspaper, with photograph,
Druids celebrate the Autumn Equinox
by blowing a Tibetan horn.

Across the aisle, facing backwards,
a young girl is singing 'Lord of the Dance'
as she colours in the clown.
She has mesmerised herself with the sound
of her own voice.

Watching Jackdaws At Tintagel

Crazy harpies, cackling and chattering,
they hop, then swing away to fetch
another spell, descending in a spiral
hauling down a shadow to lie beneath
them when they land.

We have the moonstone the moonstone

For centuries these clowns have been incanting
on these dunes, around these stones,
their true purpose hidden behind antics.
These black scraps are entrusted,
carrying the codes under their tongues:

We have the black cloak, black cloak

On landing they remain stock still,
head angled, mouth agape,
looking ridiculous.
They have a white ring round the eye,
like a target.

You're in the green oak, green oak

One, close up, has swallowed
its own shadow, hooding itself with its wings,
a pupil guarding his paper from prying eyes.
Another is pecking mortar from the stones,
soon all the evidence will be razed.

*We have the moonstone the moonstone,
We have the black cloak, black cloak,
You're in the green oak, green oak,
and you don't know.*

Creature

The creature in the shower is disturbing me.
An inch long at most, it is unlike anything
I have ever seen before.

Orange, with hairy legs and feelers
arranged in ranks,
oars for an ancient galley.

I have never seen it move,
though it is not always there,
when it reappears, it is in a different place.

I am afraid to disturb it, in case it moves
at lightning speed, afraid to bend down,
in case it leaps to attach itself to my face.

Would it help if I knew its name,
identified it in a large tome, listed under,
'Orange things to be found in the shower'.

A voice in me calls: 'Kill it, obliterate it'
but I know this is taboo
and I would be cursed.

And anyway,
it wouldn't stop it talking to me.

.

Rainton Meadows

They came from behind.

To say I heard them first would be to suggest

the sound was most important,

but all my senses told me at once

that something was coming.

It happened so fast, and yet

there was time enough, to choose

to keep on walking,

without turning round to look.

Then they overtook,

surprising me by being overhead,

both the air and the earth moved as they passed,

swans, beating away on the wind.

Storm

This time out of the south,
but furious as ever.

The high rooks know first,
tumbling into trees for cover.

Throwing up sky ramparts,
gunmetal, rolled out in front.

Sending in the wind,
shrubs shudder, boughs quiver.

Thunder, disgruntled,
gathers and roars.

Lightning, livid,
unsheathes and slashes.

Large trees bow aside,
permitting passageway.

Now twisting, in the eye,
the lambs quake, too terrified to turn.

Cat-o-nine tail rain lashes,
the soil spurts.

She is spent, has used up
her seven minute Passover.

Spring 1938

After Brecht

In this Spring, from out of this fallen whiteness,
I curse you.
I will do my part naming you,
you wolves of war, you death-head hunters.
For nothing, nothing, I say,
justifies what you monger for,
nor will excuse it afterwards.

I will tend to my own, my people, my island, my young son.
I will tuck up the apricot tree by the house wall.
But I will call down whiteness upon you,
I will never stop calling down the white words
until you are suffocated,
your blackness blighted.

The Arrival

He breaches.

Those waiting on the shore,
the sudden community,
who have waited days,
at the appointed place,
where the madman said,
where the ash-man said,
where the one eyed man told,
where the entrails divined,
he would appear,
see first his head
breaking the waves,
water and foam cascading
down his mane.

He stands waist deep,
draws in breath, tempering
his lungs with air, sharpening
his body, preparing for the land.

They have made two lines,
their torches held aloft,
his wet black hair
wet black body
wet black thatch
shine, sometimes gold,
sometimes silver,
under torchlight,
under the moon.

His huge pendulum swings,
slapping his thighs,
a child giggles,
clapping his hands in time.

The woman who is standing
behind the line of watchers,
brings her palms together
before her belly,
raises them up, and lets them part
beneath her throat.

Dancers will, from this time on,
use this gesture as a sign, to show
our shift from fear to awe.

He has gone further than the highest tides,
they watch his silver black back going,
watch him, spilling himself onto the ground.

On This Bright Spring Morning

The man with the wild hair and beard,
who paces on the corner, has a bicycle.
Perhaps it is a gift from a well-wisher,
maybe he has freed it from a hedge.

Old, tyreless, black and battered.
He has parked it by the kerb,
with one pedal on the pavement,
keeping it upright.

For hours, with a determined lean,
stripped to the waist, his shirt
hung over the crossbar,
he has been working on the bell.

He has wire wool and a cloth
and spits to make his polish.
Every few minutes he stops rubbing,
and takes the knife from his pocket.

He opens the blade just over halfway,
then holds the 'V' at arms length
and squints through it at the sun,
folds it up, and puts it away.

Now he is satisfied. He has made
a bright shell of the rusty dome.
He has caught the sun, is red shouldered.
Again he opens and closes the blade.

He does not mount, but walks
in the gutter, holding the handlebars.
The bike is on the pavement.
He is ringing, ringing, ringing.

Ruin

Looking at the front
the façade is a trick,
appearing merely faded,
its stucco bled of colour.

Narrow balconies cling on,
a lizard slips between the rails,
where the Duke's daughter, by moonlight,
would lean down and whisper.

The arched coaching doors are stuck fast,
The cut-out door, for people to duck through,
is skewed open, hanging on a twisted hinge
inside the weeds are waving, high as the eye.

Going round the side, the wound appears,
blackened roof ribs, the heart torn out.
In a broken window a spiders spins,
stitching at the gash.

An unseen magpie chuckles, checking his hoard,
among the trash and gaudy wrappers,
a gold cloak pin set with rubies,
winkled out from bedroom floorboards.

In the overgrown orchard the figs are ripe
with milk the gypsies say, will cure warts.
The grand garden, all its edges smudged,
slouches to the cut, where a trickle paints a stain.

Two dragonflies with wings bright black,
their bodies electric blue, hum like neon rods.
A hornet hovers, sucking up
moisture from a buffalo's print.

Wraiths

Around the twisted trains,
above the blasted bus,
their souls are churning.

A sudden flensing heat
has flashed away their flesh.

One arcs away with force,
but stalls and spins back down,
a dancer losing height.

Killed and killers mingle,
passing through each other,
without resistance.

Will the love of their
respective gods be enough
to haul them clear?

Will some go like swallows,
drawn by the one who knows?

Will here be hallowed ground,
or will the living sense
the air unsteady still?

Awaiting unknown acts
of slow redeeming grace.

The Leveller

He will balance it for you,
he has the art.
He will hold it up,
look along the line.

He lives down there

He knows the weight of everything,
how much heavier, if left out in the rain.
Knows the extra weight when pregnant.
Knows heart is as big as a house.

Go down, down there

Knows terne is an alloy
of lead and tin, plated onto iron.
Knows the value of everything,
prefers to be paid in pewter.

There, on the left, just over the bridge

He never speaks, but will hold your hands.
When you leave, see,
as he lifts his lids,
he has gray eyes.

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APPENDIX

1 10/9/01 PhD Proposal

Working Title: 'A poet (there) before me.'

Freud said 'Wherever I go I find that a poet has been there before me'

Without launching into an analysis of what he meant, the idea conveyed is intriguing. What is it about the poet and his relationship to psyche that enables him to go before. Does the poet occupy some special position which is closer or forward of others when it comes to psychological matters?

Consider Hegel:

Poetry is the universal art of the spirit which has become free in itself and which is not tied down for its realization to external sensuous material; instead, it launches out exclusively in the inner space and the inner time of ideas and feelings.

Introduction to Aesthetics

It is suggested that the natural language of psyche and in particular of the unconscious is that of image and symbol rather than something more prosaic. Emerson could be right when he says 'Language is fossil poetry'. Eagleton's description of the unconscious is interesting here:

'...the extreme strangeness of the unconscious, which is a place and a non-place, which is completely indifferent to reality, which knows no logic or negation or causality or contradiction, wholly given over as it is to the instinctual play of the drives and the search for pleasure.'

Literary Theory

Is it therefore true to suggest that the process of making or forming poetry, ('poesy' in the sense of the faculty or skill of poetical composition) is primarily or significantly a psychological activity. Does it allow the creator to return to a non-neurotic use of language, which knows no logic in the sense that we believe language to be a logical system. Particularly perhaps, the poet moves beyond the place suggested by Saussure's idea that language forms a closed stable system. To borrow from Plath, maybe poetry itself is a 'place of danger'. A place where, in Freudian terms, pleasure in all its anarchic forms can be revisited. It is doubtful that Horace had Freud in mind but he did equate poetry and pleasure:

That I make poetry and give pleasure

Odes bk 4, no 3, l.24.

It seems inevitable that some exploration of language itself will be necessary to consider what are the defining and distinguishing features which mark out poetry from prose and whether such characteristics have any special psychological connections.

Considering that 'modern' psychology is an art/science only about 100 years old does Freud's phrase have any relevance before our current understanding of how we think the psyche is constructed. Were there words used prior to this time that carried an equivalent meaning and would therefore Freud's observation have always been true. For example would Keats's phrases about 'soulmaking' and 'negative capability' have modern forensic equivalents in psychology and do they mark him out as one example of a poet who might have gone before.

Are all poets attuned psychological beings whose processes mirror psyche or are there many factors at play within the process of poetry making of which psyche/psychology is only one. What if anything have poets themselves said about the process of making their art which may be relevant here.

Motivation seems to be a factor to be considered. What causes a person to construct verse (as opposed to prose) and are there any features which stand out to link the process to psychology. We know for example that people will attempt verse at times of heightened awareness, whether of bliss or depression and is there a link here worthy of exploration. Paradoxically, poetry is often highly crafted and the words may be worked upon, perhaps several times; does this equate with psychological process and in particular with what we know and understand about creativity, especially spontaneity.

It would also be interesting to consider whether current writers of verse would be willing to discuss Freud's proposition in relation to their own work or to poetry in general. Also have any writers specifically referred to Freud's statement and if so what have they made of it.

Inevitably there must be some talk of whether poetry or poesy functions therapeutically. Is poetry good for health, in particular mental wellbeing. Lawrence clearly had some thoughts of psychological well being when he wrote '*Healing*':

I am not a mechanism, an assembly of various sections.
And it is not because the mechanism is working wrongly, that I am ill.
I am ill because of wounds to the soul, to the deep emotional self

As yet this proposal lacks coherence. Nor does it offer a clear methodology or approach. Largely these 'inadequacies' do not trouble me for at present the image (or images) which need to appear in order for it to cohere have not yet emerged. When they do, which I believe is inevitable, then so will the form. This is what I understand and trust as process and for me it requires considerable waiting and attendance.

JH 10/9/01.

‘A poet before me’.

Poesy as the guardian of psyche.

This thesis has its origins in a quotation I have carried with me for some years. How long I cannot remember, nor can I recall when I read or heard it first. It is from Sigmund Freud and goes as follows:

‘Everywhere I go I find that a poet has been there before me’

No doubt the words are of interest to me because they bring together two major interests and influences of my own life; poetry and psyche. I have read, written and listened to poetry since I was a boy and over the last fifteen years or so have been involved with psyche as a counselor/ psychotherapist, teacher, lecturer, trainer and writer.

After deciding to take up the invitation to study for a PhD and knowing the theme would be driven to a large degree by the quotation, it seemed an obvious starting point to find where Freud had written or spoken the words. I was interested to discover its context and whether he had elaborated the proposition. I was frustrated to discover that although the quotation as set out above appears in dictionaries of quotations no reference is given. Perhaps this should have alerted me, but I continued to search. An e-mail to the Freud museum provided a warm and prompt response to the effect that although the sentiment contained in the words appeared often in Freud’s writings, nowhere could the curator remember seeing or hearing this precise wording.

I am not quite sure whether I have finally given up hope of finding this source, in this particular form, or whether I still believe that one day I will simply meet it coming around a corner. What now interests me is how come this formula has come into being if there is no direct evidence for its ever having been said or spoken. Perhaps the e-mail gives the clue. Somewhere along the way a set of words came into existence and seeming to be a fair representation of what Freud actually believed they have been attributed to him.

More close however is the story of what took place at his seventieth birthday celebration when he was introduced as the man who had discovered the unconscious. Lionel Trilling in *The Liberal Imagination* describes what happened next

He (Freud) corrected the speaker and disclaimed the title. “The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied”.

This thesis sets out to examine the proposition that the poets were the true discoverers of the unconscious (I will defer the role of the philosophers to others, better suited, who may wish to run with that torch) and as suggested by my subtitle that they thereby assume the mantle of guardians to the psyche.

My overall concern and methodology will be to concentrate upon process rather than product. I will be much more concerned with how a given set of words, which we call a poem, comes into existence than whether it is a good or a bad poem. In Chapter One Poesy, defined as creating or making, the faculty or skill of poetical composition will be

examined. There will be an explanation of what I mean by psyche in Chapter Two for it is not to be understood as comprising the unconscious alone but many other elements working dynamically, sometimes in harmony, frequently in opposition.

Other possible Chapter headings

Very early poetry. The Vedas, The Epic of Gilgamesh, does the content of poetry reflect the times in which it was written and in particular the psychological concerns of the period.

An historical overview of the development of poetry to discern whether psyche remains throughout as the ward of the poets.

Have the poets themselves spoken about psyche specifically and what do they consider to be their relationship with her.

Given that modern psychology as we know it is a science or art little more than 100 years old what understanding and language existed prior to this to cater for psychological concerns.

The Romantic period appears crucial to an understanding of the centrality of the individual and his or her emotional and psychological concerns in art and literature.

Apart from Freud do other psychological writers give any clue to the link between poetry and psyche.

I wish to discuss with poets the central theme of this thesis and ask whether they see any connection to their own making of poetry.

Conclusion.

12/4/02.

3 22/4/02 PhD Draft

Poesy.

When Shakespeare asks the question:

Is this a Prologue or the Poesie of a ring?

he gives us a clue to the meaning of the word poesy. It means to create or make and in simple terms it leads us to view the poet as a creator or maker the poem as the thing created or made and the process whereby the poem is achieved is poesy. It is not surprising therefore to discover its origin lies in a verb. The Greek 'poiesis', meaning to make or create, traveled through Roman, Latin, Old French and Middle English to arrive in English in the latter part of the sixteenth century carrying with it with the sense of:

The faculty or skill of poetical composition.

So not only does the word retain its original root of creating and making but by now it brings with it considerations of how the making may be achieved. With what facility, aptitude, power, ability, skill, craft, expertise and discrimination will the poet work to create?

All makers of integrity are concerned not only with the object they wish to create and the manner of achieving that creation but also with the 'why-for', of bringing it into being. This thesis does not embark with the primary intention of examining the causes, reasons or motivations which lie behind artistic creation but it is inevitable that this question will keep insinuating itself.

More specifically there will be a central focus on what part is played by psyche in the act of making. Psyche will provide the center of gravity around which the piece will revolve and the force to constellate the various aspects. As the title 'Poesy as the guardian of Psyche' suggests there will be a consideration of how the poet, as maker, discharges his or her function as trustee. Are the needs of the ward, Psyche, given proper consideration? More simply, is Psyche looked after?

Put in another way, the main proposition of the work might be stated; is it possible to make an authentic creation which does not accurately reflect the pivotal role of psyche? One acute reader of the stumbling drafts of this thesis observed that the basic proposition might be reversed, stating psyche to be the guardian of poesy. This is interesting because it suggests that since we are psychological beings it is inevitable that any work of creation must as a matter of course reflect psyche to some degree. Perhaps, but the fact remains that in the paradoxical place of the maker lies the eternal tension between what the unconscious may throw up by way of inspiration and the conscious work necessary to make, shape or form that impulse.

Within this space the maker must make a conscious decision as to whether and to what degree psyche will be represented. As an example, in the introductory note to his collected poems of 1952, Dylan Thomas wrote:

I read somewhere of a shepherd who, when asked why he made, from within fairy rings, ritual observances to the moon to protect his flocks, replied; 'I'd be a damn' fool if I didn't!' These poems, with all their crudities, doubts and confusions, are written for the love of Man and in praise of God, and I'd be a damn' fool if they weren't.

This story may echo Derek Walcott's assertion that it is the fate of poetry to fall in love with the world but it does not follow that the manner of that love-making is prescribed. The poet, as maker, is no different from the shepherd, he has choice as to the manner of his creations. The contract between maker and muse contains clauses and conditions like any other covenant. This work suggests that one of the terms of the agreement is that psyche must appear in the work and that she will be faithfully represented and nurtured. It is suggested that so fundamental is this obligation that if it is breached then the contract will fail and the work if it is made, will be forfeit.

Flaubert is said to have given the aspiring Maupassant much help and guidance as he worked at his prose writings. He was told:

Whatever you want to say there is only one word to express it, only one verb to give it movement, only one adjective to qualify it. You must search for that word, that verb, that adjective, and never be content with an approximation, never resort to tricks, even clever ones, and never have recourse to verbal sleight of hand to avoid a difficulty.

The Nature of Psyche.

Throughout this work Psyche will be considered as a living force. As such an exploration of her nature and a description of her mode of operation will be sought in preference to attempting a scientific definition. Since definition, to some degree, is always trying to confine, it is inappropriate to a phenomenon which by its very nature resists containment.

Already she has acquired a personal pronoun, almost without thinking. This seems entirely fitting, since unconsciousness is part of her makeup, and whilst she could quite easily be he, she will be retained. Partly in recognition of her personification as female, when as a mortal she was to woo Eros, and partly for consistency, which appears as an amusing paradox given her love of metamorphosis.

Even if every time she is heard he is also catered for, this picture would be deficient, for Psyche contains elements which transcend gender and personhood and are rightly referred to as transpersonal. Not the least of these will be those features which we gather together under the term numinous. Within her nature we will see some certainties; just as many mysteries. Since she is alive we will witness her death and her passing will take as many forms as her living. Her capacity for regeneration appears undiminished.

Some recognition will be given to those disciplines which seek to study and work with her; psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, any which take 'psych' as their prefix. However their motivation appears significantly different to ours. Mostly they seek to define, confine, modify, treat, understand, invite conformity and compliance, either in the individual or society in general. Their port of departure is usually theory, their operations invariably rational, their language quasi-scientific, they possess a sense of direction and an idea of where they wish to arrive. There are some within these vocations who speak as though they were artists as opposed to scientists, their relationship with psyche will appear differently.

Psyche meanders on, for the most part oblivious or indifferent to their ministrations but usually open to relationship with anyone truly interested in listening to what she has to say. Her language however cannot be found in any primer and those seeking to converse must learn anew each time they wish to speak with her, what they have learned from one person may not work with another. Sometimes she may offer you a word but beware of attributing a meaning other than her own, which she may not yet know. More likely she will give you a sign, a hint, an echo, a half fleeting sense, often some part of your body will be affected long before your mind arrives on the scene.

Her birth is mystery. Irresistible speculation leads us to ponder whether there are flickers in the perplexed frown of a simian, the stumbling start of an invitation for her to enter in. Perhaps her cradle was awareness, a dim growing sense that as creatures, of whatever era, we could form a sense of our own being. Certainly by the time the first gesture between two creatures is made, the first time a shape is traced in the sand she has announced her arrival. With these early primitive signatures she herself is finding her way. At first her purpose and function appear uncertain to her but at each and every encounter with the world around her she learns a little more about herself. Awe and wonder appear probable features of her early life as she tries to grasp some sense of her place in the scheme of things. Her nursery is nature and her initial responses are to use all of her developing senses to locate herself. These early features are important for us to remember for they continue to be the center of gravity of her operations even today. She continues to rely primarily upon her senses although she has developed a mighty intellect over time. Awe and wonder are her base elements, the fuel for her engine. The world around her changes, as it must, and forever she responds, awestruck and full of wonder, fearful and delighted.

Perhaps she gives part of herself to every living thing, possibly she breathes a little into that which appears dead, laying traces of animism. Increasingly she prefers the company of humankind and a marriage begins which has celebrated more anniversaries than there are jewels to express. The relationship between psyche and humanity continues to be the most intriguing, fascinating, impenetrable, mystery of all.

As evolution thrusts forward psyche moves alongside adjusting herself as necessary to keep pace. So close becomes the bond between her and us that at times the two seem one. This symbiotic alliance was forged before the gods existed and certainly before language opened its mouth. Perhaps it might be said that there never was a time when there was a separation between us but that we ourselves gave birth to psyche, that she was latent and we chose to kiss awake this maid in waiting. If this was a choice to espouse a part of ourselves it is a choice which we could abandon.

The first self embrace when a man or woman enfolded themselves in their own encircling arms was when the banns of this wedding were published. This warming reassuring cuddle may have moved into a rocking accompanied by a sound. A rhythm is created; this is the first of man's makings, the opening poesy.

Keats '*Ode to Psyche*'

Keats said this was the 'first' and 'only' poem 'with which I have taken even moderate pains' (Morton p379). He begins with the sudden exclamation:

O Goddess!

knowing full well that Psyche was a mortal. In later Greek mythology she was adopted as the personification of the soul, often appearing as a young woman with butterfly wings. In the story of the marriage between Cupid and Psyche by Apuleius taken from Book 5 of '*The Golden Ass*', she is introduced as the mortal, third and youngest daughter of a 'King of the west'. Such is her beauty however that people begin to worship her in the same way as they had previously feted Venus. In her jealousy Venus sends her son

Eros (Cupid to the Romans) to make her fall in love with the ugliest man on earth. The whole story then pivots around the fact that Eros himself falls for Psyche. Significantly this was to be one of the last times that a god was to woo a mortal and Psyche has often been described as a latecomer. Jupiter eventually afforded her immortality because of her trials and tribulations in pursuit of her consort Eros, but it must never be forgotten that she began life as a mortal. The story of Cupid and Psyche is the story of how a mortal achieves union with the divine. Psychologically the tale's significance lies in the pursuit of the divine within. Shakespeare saw this movement between the earthly and the heavenly as part of the poet's vision:

The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling
Doth glance from heaven to earth from earth to heaven

Keats, knowing that Psyche arrived so late, at a time when the old gods were waning as:

Olympus' faded hierarchy

offers his espousal of her to compensate for her previous lack of veneration. Of course we must also remember that the union between Eros and this mortal girl carries further significance when we recall that Eros is often considered to be firstborn of all the Gods:

Some argue that Eros, hatched from the world-egg was the first born of the gods since, without him, none of the rest could have been born.

Graves p58.

So as the old gods are dying a young girl, arriving late on the scene, makes a relationship with the first-born of all the gods, Love himself. If this is the archetypal marriage it symbolizes the struggle of every mortal to come into relationship with the erotic. It is a tale of psychological maturing and as Motion observes this holds true for Keats himself:

It is more revealing to say that he develops the connection between Psyche and his (Keats's) own identity.

Motion p388.

By offering to build his own 'fane' to Psyche, Keats is building a temple to his own development. Motion once more:

Just as Psyche creates herself by her actions and their often painful consequences, so Keats authorizes himself by his efforts as a poet. Both are self-made. Both define themselves as novelties in order to amass the burden of an admired past. Both are soul makers. p 389.

'*Ode to Psyche*' is not just an artistic endeavour on the part of Keats but a discharge of his responsibility as a human being to forge his own soul.

When a publisher decided recently to publish a special edition of Robert Graves' translation of Apuleius's *Cupid and Psyche* it is significant that a psychological writer and worker was asked to provide an introduction. Marion Woodman had this to say:

Parents, like the gods and goddesses of mythology, are divine before they are human. They are divine because as infants we are totally dependant upon them for life and nurture. Gradually, as we are weaned from that dependence, our parents descend from the Olympus upon which they were initially, unconsciously placed and move into a recognizable, conscious human state. They die into life, though traces of their original divinity remain in our unconscious.

22/4/02.

4 25/6/02 PhD Second Outline.

The making of a PhD is an act of creation. The bringing into being of a doctoral thesis involves dynamics akin to those used by writers, poets, composers, painters, sculptors, who engage in creative endeavours. (So is the writing of a PhD different from say, writing a book?)

The process, which will invariably occupy a number of years, ought not to be seen as an isolated, objective academic exercise partitioned off from the rest of the life of its maker but as a subjective, integrated and intrinsic part of the existence of the author. The past, present and future life and experience of the maker will inform and reflect in the work and the work will reciprocally affect and influence its creator.

A relationship is established between the maker and what is made. This relationship will be seen to have predated the decision to embark, to persist throughout the making and to continue beyond what might be termed completion. Viewed in this light the process of making and eventually the evaluation of the product will incorporate aspects more commonly included in performance than in critical discourse. The whole performance of what is involved will be seen to be just that, a performance, a drama which unfolds.

The range of ingredients which may legitimately be included increases dramatically if the work is viewed as play rather than work. Evaluation may transform into appreciation if the reader were to be audience as opposed to critic. This approach does not deny a place for traditional critical discourse but it does seek to dislodge that methodology from its throne and invite participation from what in the past may have been viewed as lesser players. So the rational, the logical and the analytical will not disappear but find themselves arrayed alongside intuition, emotion, and the felt sense. Mystery will lie down with mastery but nor will the process be limited to binary opposites.

Psyche certainly plays out in contrasts but also more subtly in shades and hues which carry within them more than simply putting black against white, good against evil and so on. Her (feminine, partly because of her earthly persona as Psyche but also to give the notion of a living thing. She is of course equally at home in the male and actually is beyond gender) palette offers variety, her instruments can produce a wide range of sounds and most importantly of all she is prone to looking for new forms of expression rather than adhering to the accepted. So the direction of the work may not be linear and developmental but meandering and explorative. At times it may well dive to great depth

determined to hold to a single line with tenacity. At other times it may skip and dance over the surface lightheartedly, turning whimsically this way and that.

Time will be experienced differently by both the writer and the reader and instead of a chronological account written with the benefit of hindsight episodes will occur which at the time seem to have no particular relevance and might not even eventually appear to place themselves logically. Space also may be warped and events may assert themselves in places which appear paradoxical or contrary. No doubt there will be a conscious attempt made to relate matters to each other, connections will be sought as the desire to make meaning asserts itself. However, meaning may take on a wider definition, to include all the senses and the response of the body itself. The gut is not an inferior organ to the brain.

Since the unconscious will be given its 'royal road', that which is unseen will be as relevant as that which can be seen. Images and ideas which are only dimly discernible in the shadows will be no less relevant than those which stand out clearly in the light. At times words will fail to carry enough potency for what seeks to express itself and another form of expression may be more suitable, perhaps a sound, perhaps an image perhaps a third dimension as the hands seek to make what the word will not carry.

Instead of trying to place the work into a given and accepted shape perhaps the shape will evolve from the making. As the body of the work and the body of the maker move along in a mutual reciprocation the form will emerge from the relationship. That form may also change as the days and weeks pass sometimes looking this way, sometimes that. One day the brain will assert erudition and order and cleverly place the fragments into an emerging mosaic only for the gut to come along and evacuate a whole load of raw material over the evolving plan.

The thoughts, comments, observations and experiences of poets and other makers will be considered as they speak to their own involvement in their lives and work. Perhaps from this some themes may emerge which can be placed in relationship without denying the unique individual process of each author. Whilst patterns may emerge it seems highly likely that the act of creation must of necessity retain elements which defy definition. Perhaps this thesis will take on the form of a conversation, although there will be moments of soliloquy. Maybe passages will spring from a sense of voices responding to each other rather than a presentation from one speaker coming from a remote or removed position.

Given that the overall approach might contain some or all of the features already considered (and undoubtedly many which have not yet loomed into view) it makes the notion of embarkation seem curious. Is there a time and place which could be said to be the beginning or was that not long ago in a place which can't be recalled. What does occur in this very moment is what it would be like to take some of the propositions already stated and examine them again in the light of what others may have to say.

At a recent lecture I was introduced to these words from Wilson Harris:

'This was a signal of the phenomenon of creativity, linkages between characters and authors, linkages between a painted world that paints the painter even as the painter paints, a sculpted world that sculpts the sculptor

as the sculptor sculpts, a written world that writes the writer as the writer writes ... Nature appears to sleep (when nature seems passive), the psyche appears to sleep (when the dreamer dreams and appears to forget his dream), but nature suddenly acts and erupts, the dream acts upon and erupts in the dreamer, and becomes the visibility of meaning within a fiction of co-relationship.'

'A signal' brings us to attention, we hear an intimation, even hints of a warning. Our senses arouse themselves and such a rise to attention is apt for we next hear of the 'phenomenon of creativity'. A phenomenon is that which is apprehended by the senses, which makes an appearance to our consciousness. We are immediately taken beyond the mind or intellect to a more inclusive place which invites responses from our whole body. In this beginning the senses come first.

There is a sense of gathering, of anticipation. Next we hear 'linkages' and hear the word repeated in the next line as the refrain of connection is established. In the next three lines the indulgence of alliteration reinforces that link as the chain is forged piece by piece. Each time the p's', the s's, and the w's are intoned we see the beads being strung and the necklace emerges. The measure further reinforces as we notice our foot tapping as we listen and feel the urge to just let the words roll round the passages of the body again and again. We are being lulled by the ancient device of threefold repetition which in turn appeals to our desire to hear the words again and just play with the delight of saying them over and over .. 'a painted world that paints the painter even as the painter paints.' Not only does the idea contained in the line arrest our attention but the form of its presentation becomes a song, a refrain. Something has been caught, never to be forgotten.

Of course Harris has us in his thrall but he is also in thrall to his own ability to enchant. As he speaks of the work acting on the maker that process is happening to him. His next linkage is with 'appears' again repeated thrice. 'Appears' invites us to wonder, to ask what is going on, even to toy with reality as the question becomes 'what is **really** going on here' as opposed to what appears to be going on. Of course the difficulty we encounter is that we know, albeit unconsciously, that there is no such thing as reality, or at least not one reality. Cleverly, Harris is linking, stringing together, bringing into relationship at the same time as significantly upsetting our sense of location. This is further disrupted when, whilst appearing to be sleepy and passive 'nature suddenly acts and erupts'. This phenomenon is accurately portrayed. She is sudden and arbitrary, arising from her own pressures and need for expression. From depth she breaks through to the surface with ferocious energy, displaying in visible activity that which had hitherto been contained. She does not come at our bidding or dance to our tune but is mistress of her own entrances and exits. This is a shocking realization when we have to admit to being acted upon and erupted into, not when we choose or how we choose but, phenomenally.

Of course what is thrown up by the totality of the passage is the emergence of 'the visibility of meaning within a fiction of co-relationship'. Harris offers this as the conclusion to the paragraph, but naturally, (and this seems the only word to employ here) it does not bring with it certainty. Admittedly he offers an idea with which we can hold ourselves but upon examination we sense that what is being presented is not a product, a finished item but the introduction to an unpredictable process. Whilst we may be able to

entertain the concept of a visible meaning within a fiction of co-relationship we cannot possibly know in detail what that will produce. Also by playing so cleverly with the word 'fiction', we are left disconcerted. Harris is saying that the phenomenon of creativity will produce linkages and lead to relationship. On the one hand he is inviting us to consider this proposition as a fact, something to be relied upon, discernible and probable. However despite the implication, the word he actually employs is fiction and not fact. Almost as we are being cradled and held by the proposition of fact he tumbles us with fiction.

Not only that but there is huge ambiguity in the phrase itself: 'a fiction of co-relationship'. What does it mean, does it have one or more meanings, will all readers receive the same message, does the author himself truly know, or is he still working with the work and being worked upon by the work? Perhaps what Harris does know is that contained within the passage is an invitation to travel to a point which is beyond that usually considered when exploring creativity.

The use of 'co-relationship' and in particular the prefix is intriguing. What is achieved by linking 'co' (together, in company with, jointly, equally, reciprocally, mutually) to 'relationship' a word already connoting linkage (the state or character of being related)? Maybe the invitation is to consider that relationship itself is not enough in the sense that something can be added beyond that which we normally understand to be included within its meaning. Here is the author, the maker, considering the dynamics involved in making. Not only is he introducing the notion of a reciprocating relationship between the maker and what is being made but there is an implication of yet more to be included. The boundaries or containers are being stretched to allow the possibility of even more elements to enter. This is a true reflection not only of the process of creating but it also mirrors the role played by psyche. Psyche is seldom content with things as they are and is continually seeking out new forms of expression. As the engine of psychological existence she drives forward developmentally rather than logically and rationally. She meanders, looking in corners and shadows for emerging shapes rather than carrying a set of patterns in her satchel. Her journey is determined not by an itinerary or plan but by what she encounters along the way. This does not mean her role is merely fateful in the sense of being at the mercy of events but it does mean that she, like the maker, is affected by what happens along the way.

There is a small wading bird, perhaps it's a dunlin, that spends its time busily weaving to and fro where the sea meets the sand. It appears to be concerned with the constant movement of the waves, dashing in when they recede and withdrawing equally as swiftly as they push in. Also as it probes the sand with its beak it seems to be trying to put in a stitch like some determined seamstress attempting to pull together the fraying hem between sea and sand. The image that emerges is of some agent of nature trying to establish a line or structure where no such feature exists. The line between land and sea is forever fluid but like the dunlin there exists an urge to attempt the definition, to say this is where one stops and the other begins, this is where the join is, that will hold things together. This is the tension at the heart of artistic creation. Like the dunlin, the artist is often to be seen at the edge, moving to and fro in that ever changing space which one second is water and the next drying land, only to be submerged again. (cf Bishop's 'Sandpiper' "The tide is/ higher or lower. He couldn't tell you which./His beak is focused;")

Watch the person who is walking at the shoreline. Usually head down, watching the edge line he will attempt to outwit the ocean. He will always be one step ahead just out of reach always knowing just where the wave will expire, gasping into the sand just short of his feet. With all his skill he will maintain his mastery just always out of reach, safe. We know of course that such players seldom travel home with dry feet. How they come to get wet, on one level, is very simple. They come into relationship with the sea. Such an explanation is too simple. Out of the fiction of co-relationship a story has yet to evolve. For one wave-player it may be that he tripped while frantically backpedaling, another was caught in that split second when he decided to turn and run, in that instant when he was revolving rather than moving away. Another may have been distracted by the demon cackle of a gull overhead, or by the sad siren of a ship, calling his attention away. Then of course there is the old and angry sea god who likes nothing more than to remind us that he can do as he will and just places a cold and watery hand round our ankle lest we forget.

Each drama as it unfolds has a truth of its own. For the maker the tension lies in the ability to remain connected to the phenomenon of the eruption without seeking mastery. To participate and to participate actively whilst remaining open to continuing emergence. Perhaps this is what Feinstein means when she speaks of her 'alertness to the world around me'. (*Strong Words* 189) Being alive to possibility.

Grace Nichols in her collection *i is a long memoried woman* is concerned with making, and she uses beads as one of her images. The slaves who arrive in the new land mourn for many losses; lost lands, lost moons, lost lives:

But O she grieved for them
Walking beadless
In another land

Being beadless is being without adornment, without that worn evidence of culture which indicates that the wearer is more than simply brute animal. Of course Nichols cleverly inserts the 'O' as a visual reminder of the bead shape as well as the sound of a sigh. Beads also connote connection for seldom are they worn singly but usually brought together into a relationship to form a necklace, a bracelet, an anklet, a waist band, a head band. So the O stands for each bead but also the circle made by the bringing together. Such encircling of the body contrasts of course to the 'metals' of the slave chains. A body can be braceleted with beads in an expression of joyful freedom, to wear colour and the indices of culture or it can be bound in an attempt to eradicate that culture and impose a fresh one. I have carried with me for some years an image which seems to fit with Nichol's notion. I see from a distance a woman standing when her hand travels quickly up to her throat. It seems as if she may be having a seizure or choking. What is actually happening is that her necklace has broken and as she senses the slippage her hand flies upwards in an attempt to catch and contain the spillage. I am able to see some of the beads as if in slow motion as they fall. They bounce on the marble floor each bounce reducing and slowly they become earth bound and some roll away, because the woman is standing on a patio of a beach house some roll off the edge and down the cliffs below. Some beads may be found, others will be lost forever. She moves her hand away bending forwards and looks down at the one bead she has caught and held against her throat.

The moment when a necklace breaks is shocking. That which was arranged and contained and held together, suddenly, phenomenally, flies apart. The relationship which was established is broken. The relationship between the wearer and the beads is disrupted as is the relationship between the beads themselves. The arrangement of beads is like that of people, they represent a sense of harmony, of civilization as the various individual units are brought together in a form which reflects values and beliefs. Nichols is aware of the threat to civilization for she punctuates the line:

From one continent/to another

with a slash, which could be made by a machete or a whip. The slash may be unusual in poetry but here it accurately and visually indicates the cut between the two worlds. The trajectory of the slash is that of the machete strike or the fall of the whip. Nichols although aware of the devastating trauma suffered by the slaves in the forced passage concludes the first poem of this collection with a note of hope:

now she stoops
in green canefields
piecing the life she would lead

Although bowed down and stooped, the green allows for new growth even from this downtrodden posture as she seeks to piece together another life. This re-growth is echoed later in *Sacred Flame*

But I
Armed only with
My mothers smile
Must be forever gathering
My life together like scattered beads.

I recall my very first school days and the delight I found in being invited to string beads. Admittedly this was a new pastime but I suspect the real joy lay in the peaceful control it afforded set against the chaos of the new, noisy and chaotic environment school presented. The chance to sit quietly and safely away from the new and threatening situations and to make something so simple and yet so gorgeous was a haven. Perhaps it was also the seeding ground for later activities for when a dear friend of mine contracted cancer a couple of years ago I made a trip to the Bead Shop in Covent Garden and made him a necklace of forty black glass beads alternated with silver spacers. Forty because of his age. He lived to reach forty-one when I gave him another bead to add but it remained loose by his bedside when he died. A few weeks ago I took out the remainder of the beads and made myself a necklace of the same design. After the sadness of his death and the intervening suicide of another close friend was I attempting to 'gather' my life back together?

Poets are gatherers, their beads words. They string together words threading the line until a shape emerges. The process is not however simply mechanical and repetitive for the opportunity to create new shapes and lines always presents itself. Bani Shorter, a Jungian analyst, spends time considering the process of creation in her book about ritual entitled *Susceptible to the Sacred*. She echoes the theme of collecting together:

Psychologically, then, ritual gathers scattered and sporadic elements to transform an undefined sentiment into individual consciousness.

p. 23

Looking at the process of creation with her psychological eye she, like Harris, pays attention to the phenomenon:

But ritual like creation does not proceed; it occurs.

p. 29

Cocteau may be correct to suggest art is a marriage of the unconscious and the conscious but put this way the proposition is too simple. Shorter expands:

Moreover, it is now rather generally accepted that the unconscious is a piece of equipment to which everyone has access. It manifests in primordial and archetypal patterns both recognizable and repeatable though at the same time personally significant and unique. It would be unrealistic to point to any one ritual as illustrative of all that might be said on the subject, as unrealistic as to expect that those who undergo similar observances will be stamped with an identical impress.

Shorter is repeating here in her language of psychology what Harris, Nichols and other artists know, that whilst the process of creation has discernible themes, the relationship of conscious to unconscious being just one these, the outcome of the creative experience is seldom predictable. Of course it is unsurprising to find Shorter opening her chapter on 'The rite of Creativity' with Keats's words, 'that which is creative must create itself'. At length she goes on to explain how she sees the role of the maker after he or she has experienced a psychological realization or breakthrough:

Contrary to what is popularly believed, creative artists, saints and heroes fight the actual rather than the ideal gods of our society - the gods of conformism, for example, as well as the gods of apathy, greed and power. Henceforth and thereafter an enlightened one is consciously entrusted with the art and process of his or her own life; having been shown the natural creativity of the universe revealed in specific and personal terms. This is to say that our most profound insights come to us by surprise and arise out of human conditions and circumstances. Life-altering revelations are not often vouchsafed in the form of dissociated visions; neither are they readily discernible from the study of exotic texts. They cannot be sought after consciously. Instead in the midst of difficult and commonplace tensions an impact is made by the receipt of a palpable and unforgettable intuition which penetrates to the heart of the situation and transforms it. The impress of such an insight is stamped on the soul for ever and creates sacred history for a person. Yet, over generations we have been conditioned to reject the notion that a divine aspect is characteristic of our human nature and pervades it. So the realization is accompanied by a haunting strangeness that asks for verification, as we later seek, by way of whatever mentors and mediators we dare trust, wisdom and acceptance of

that truth. Finding the solitary responsibility for infinite revelation too great to bear, we search for a community of witnesses and a form of celebration to affirm and contain us while we attempt to absorb transcendence. These are notions, however, that will be eschewed by psychologists who labour to explain the self with the logic of the mind rather than the innate logic of psyche. What psyche appears to yearn for at a time of supreme challenge and breakthrough is no longer an objective god. It reaches towards and accepts one ready to become subjective. And yet, the phenomenal experience is intimidating.

Here Shorter writes not only as analyst but as maker, she is her own poet as she carefully and eloquently constructs her own offering in service to her lifetime knowledge and experience. Her practice may have been populated by artists and writers, but here her writing is informed as much by her own devotion to poetry, her reading and listening to Heaney read at Edinburgh, as it is by her extensive theoretical and academic heritage. Knowing what it means to be 'entrusted with the art and process of his or her own life' this passage is in part her discharge of that trust in terms of her own life. She offers it to others (the book is 'dedicated to those in preparation as analysts') but it is more than a gift, it is evidence of a maker at work in her own right.

She chooses her words carefully and with precision, perhaps she understands the sentiment behind Flaubert's words to Maupassant. Some are simple words but beautifully poised. So profound insights arrive 'by surprise', perhaps no other word but surprise would do here with its atmosphere of shock and delight intermingled with the affect, the acting upon, the influence. Is surprise so very different from the 'eruption' which Harris employs?

'Palpable'; that which can be ascertained by touch or appreciated by the senses; is neat, and Keats would surely have seen shades of 'testing on the pulse' in such a word. He may well have nodded if he had read 'haunting strangeness', echoing as it does so much of what was contained in his notion of 'negative capability'. Her words are integral. She writes about 'the innate logic of psyche' but the unity comes about because she chooses to write using the language of that logic. Shorter also offers us something else. Not only is there form in what she writes but penetrating to the very heart of her passage is an idea. Her title itself gives us a clue; *Susceptible to the Sacred*, introduces the transpersonal element and the phrase 'a divine aspect is characteristic of our human nature and pervades it', is pivotal to her whole argument. Susceptibility is carefully chosen to connote capacity not inevitability. Shorter does not suggest we are divine but that within us is a capacity to be affected by some divine aspect. Is this not the story of Psyche and Eros reworked, what occurs when a human encounters a god. Is this not another angle of the fiction of co-relationship. Is it Nichols calling upon Ogun (the iron god of Nigeria who became Ogoun the Voodoo hero warrior of Haiti) or Anansi (The Spider Man trickster of West Africa whose stories are relished in the West Indies). For Thomas his susceptibility seems to be to the 'one God' yet paradoxically his story is set beside an old ritual to the moon. For Woodman the equation is succinct; 'divinity, like infancy, remains' and though the gods die into life 'traces of their original divinity remain in our unconscious' to act as 'mirrors which allow us to reflect upon our own psychic process'. In some sense this is Keats's pursuit of Beauty and Truth and his haste to offer divine status to Psyche in the Ode, when he full well knows she is mortal.

In an attempt to draw together the pieces of this work so far I am tempted to return to the small desk of infant school and the cocoon of stringing beads. A necklace will emerge with a large central orb. This is Harris's proposition that creativity is a phenomenon; that which appears, is observed or perceived; but that alone will not create a piece of work. Undoubtedly some such eruption may be at the heart of the matter but a relationship needs to be established which will form the matter. D'Aguiar invites us to consider the notion of a 'covenant with creativity'. Here we are reworking Harris again, the covenant, with its mutual agreement between two or more persons echoing 'co-relationship'. But there is more, for covenant comes trailing theological overtones of the reciprocating pact between the human and the divine; 'the engagements entered into by and with the Divine Being' (OED). So on either side of that central bead there are companions, keepers, trustees even, whose role it is to touch up against the core and hold it in place. Perhaps these guardians could be seen as consciousness on one flank and the unconscious on the other, perhaps the human and the divine. Beyond this central motif of three primary protagonists there will be outriders on each side, their number and nature determined by the maker, the finished form yet to arise out of the fiction of the relationship. The story of this necklace, of this PhD is yet to be told and always there is the hand clutching at the throat for the string might give way at any moment.

Poets accept the covenant of making in the knowledge that there are phenomenal forces at work whose purpose is to destabilize. Yeats gathers together, garlands his words to make *The Second Coming*, only to tell us the shocking news that 'the centre cannot hold' and Achebe for his seminal novel on the disintegrating effects of colonialism on Africa borrows from the same line for his title 'Things fall apart'. It may be that the strands of this thesis may unravel at any time during the making. The secret, if there is one, might be to remain engaged with the process whilst recognizing that for a while the only stance that can be adopted is that of attendant.

I recall a walk down a gorge in eastern Crete known as the Valley of the Dead. The fissure resembled a wound to the land slashed by some angry god who had stabbed a knife into the heartland and cut a slit outwards all the way to the coast. Walking that gorge was a first experience of that type of terrain, huge vertical sides with tiny ledges on which goats perched as if lifted there by some unseen hand. The heat was reflected off the cliffs and the stream was only a dry trench with swift lizards rustling the twigs as they ran. The gorge opened out at the sea into a small plain where a city had been built behind the port. There was no inland access to the city except on foot and visitors mainly arrived by sea. Walking among the ruins we discovered pomegranate trees laden with ripe fruit, some had already fallen on the ground. 'Pomegranate', the word had always seemed so romantic, mysterious, connoting distant lands and exotic stories. Here they grew wild like weeds and tasted like the gods had made them.

25/6/02

5 9/10/9/03 First Review

A new notebook purchased at 'Scribere: quaderni' an up-market paper shop in the Calle Palau, Valencia. The impulse was to have one notebook in which I might keep all my working and jottings instead of having them spread out, scattered, in several books and

papers and piles, always defying organization. At breakfast the next morning came the phrase ‘inpulse (an interesting mis-spell in itself) ‘impulse to organisation’. I had for some weeks been wondering if what I had written so far for this PhD could be filed into a ring binder under some loose headings, ‘the forebears’, ‘the parents’, ‘childhood’ so as to make some sense overall, instead of simply opening a new word document each time I sat down to write.

The notebook itself has been designed to appeal. About two thirds A5 in size there are two opening papers and two end papers. The bulk is made up of eighteen gatherings of eight sheets each making a gross of pages. Two hundred and eighty eight sides. The end papers are glued on to a leather binding which has a flap which folds over to enclose the whole thing rather like a wallet. Let into this flap is an eyelet through which passes a bootlace of matching leather. This is knotted at one end so it cannot pass the eye and is long enough to be wound round twice counterclockwise and tucked in on itself. The leather is medium fine, possibly calf or goat and is a mid brown. Set down beside a cup of café con leche it matches well. Made in Venice I guess the maker had in mind the age when a medieval merchant or scribe might carry such a book. It is indulgent retro-chic. The smell of the leather and the foldings and bindings, the knottings and turnings of the thong are unashamedly erotic. This is a book intended to catch the eye.

There is a dedication written on the first page:

“A Book of Faith –
for John
Clare, Spain
10.9.03.”

The book is a gift. A strange gift for I chose it for myself and knew it to be for me by the tears which came into my eyes as I handled it turning it over and over. Putting it back in its place on the shelf I wondered about the one in darker leather, altogether more masculine I thought, less likely to catch the attention than the softer piece. It took just a second for me to reach out and repossess this one and hand it to Clare saying “This one and I would like you to buy it for me as a present”. Carrying the unopened package to her in the evening I asked that when she was ready I would like her to write something in it before she gave it to me. It came back to me this morning from as true and steady a friend as a man could have. A gentle leader, leading on.

I have now written also, on the second page. I forgive myself with some amusement for the rather male nature of the response. I have listed down what I have written so far towards this piece of work, the world and I, choose to call a PhD. There are listed under the heading ‘Calculation & Organisation’ seven sub headings each with a page and word count with totals at the bottom telling me the answer so far amounts to 40 pages 20201 words. Underneath I remind myself without the slip this time by writing: ‘Impulse to Orga[i]nisation, though this time an extra ‘i’ creeps in. It cannot be helped because the slip has already done what I set out to do. This was to write about the ‘I’. That extra ‘I’ which to some degree had been forgotten. No, not forgotten so much as sidelined, marginalized, skirted round, become the plaything of displacement activities. What I had set myself down to do today before that second slip so wonderfully, so faithfully, preceded me was to disclose the revelation that what was now missing from the work was ‘I’; with a nod to grammar, me.

Presently without the aid of a dictionary, I reckon memoir must be construed as the writer writing his or her own story. It is as simple as that. Not in the sense of a look here, look at me, see what I have just done but a faith that my story is worth the effort. Of course this quickly becomes that I am worth the effort. She has bound me to my faith in myself as firmly as the binding of the book. The spine which runs up through the middle of the book is the spine which keeps me standing. I need to begin to draw together and bind up into their gatherings the parts I have already written and the parts yet to be written will need their place. I will need to keep opening the binding, opening the pages, writing, closing the pages and wrapping the cord around but each time there will be a focus. How does this piece serve my story. I will be the thread that stitches. That stitches together the sides of a wound. A lot of what will be held by the closing of that wound will be suffering. The faith is to hold to that. Without that, Story is not matched and met in the way she calls for.

How to achieve a faithful centrality for the 'I' (which I note stands very well for itself as a letter with perfect symmetry and balance, a broad base. An upright body and a capital perfectly balancing its firm foundation) which does not slip over into narcissism, grandiosity or victim-hood but finds a voice with which to say 'this is how it was and this is how I am' and which trusts, keeps faith with the reader to hear it so. That is the maker's task. This is my task. It has taken two years, 20201 words, the completion in the meanwhile of a book about the process of change, and a whole life of living, and includes in it the living of others, to reach the simple conclusion that what I must do is write my own story. A conclusion of course as you will already have realized that is simply the beginning. An uncle of mine, once dedicated to the thankless task of trying to aid my understanding of the mystery of mathematics, coined the phrase to describe the fleeting moments of comprehension which I showed as 'truth at last dawns upon his slow understanding'. Better late than never that I understand what I am for.

To begin in faith, to go on in faith, to hold to that faith when it seems faith has gone, to draw to a conclusion in faith, knowing that it will not be the end, but that an end to the making must be achieved so far as is possible and faithfully to place the making into the world. All in the hope that like the story before I can then simply sit back and smile. I notice a strange thing has happened. I recall writing about story smiling and look back to the piece in question written only a few days ago in order to remind myself. In so doing I discover that despite my best efforts to list the work so far in the new notebook I have failed to bind up this piece. I do so now noting another ten pages, another 6165 words. I could find no title for the piece when I wrote it so gave it for lack of any other idea my initials, in lower case I notice; 'jh'. Perhaps I was on the right track, perhaps some dawning of ownership, of authorization, of authority, lay in those small characters jh. Perhaps the tentative steps to disclosure. I might be identified by those small letters jh. Good to look back and notice myself emerging, at first by the use of initials, initialization. Without knowing it I was starting, coming to life and saying this is not only about story, and story making but the about a special and singular story, like every other story, and quite unique, this is the beginning of my story. I'm glad to have remembered that I forgot it to include it first. And there is an 'a' missing, the singular article. It goes in the middle, the whole is JAH, in capitals.

I do not remember being born but my body remembers very well. One morning about ten years ago I think, I could check because I have the date written down in a notebook

somewhere, my body decided to tell me the story, to remind me of how it was to be born. I dreamed:

I am in an airport, almost certainly the arrival part, and am coming down a series of open concrete stairways which zig-zag diagonally back and forwards on themselves. I notice that the whole building moves as though shaken by some huge force and the staircase is dislodged. I am trapped between two levels of the stairs which have concertinaed in on themselves leaving me unhurt but trapped in a tiny confined space. I realize immediately any further movement and I will certainly be crushed to death by the massive weight and it seems important to remain perfectly still in case this sets something moving again. I am lying still and terrified when I realize there are people just outside of my space who realize that I am trapped in there. They realize there is no prospect of moving the debris which weighs hundreds of tons but their suggestions as to how I am to be extricated are bizarre. An implement like a pruning saw is passed in to me with the suggestion that I cut off my arms as this might enable me to get my shoulders through the opening. I decline. Next comes a pistol. There are no words but the implication is that it is hopeless so I might as well end the suffering now. I decline this invitation as well and ask for some washing up liquid to be brought. This I then squirt over my body producing sufficient lubrication for me to slip out of the opening.

Upon waking I recall two strange events. One was the immediate realization that I knew that what I had dreamed about was being born but that at the same time I could hear a cuckoo calling. At this point I began to wonder whether I had really awakened but knowing that I was awake I listened again and there it was, a cuckoo. It was about four in the morning just getting light and in the heart of suburban Newcastle. I could not be hearing what I was hearing but there it was again. I got out of bed without waking my partner and went outside. There were allotments on the other side of the Metro lines about five hundred yards away to the left. There it was again and I walked a little way down in the hope of catching sight of the bird. I have been a bird watcher for many years. Not an addict but a keen amateur. That day the cuckoo was not seen and only once in my life so far have I seen one. Apparently they are one of those birds which is much heard but virtually never seen.

My conclusions about the dream are a story in themselves. The initial impressions can be checked from the contemporaneous record, if the book or paper can be discovered. Now my main impression is that from the beginning I had to fend for myself. I even had to work out how to be born, to find a way to bring myself into the world. A pruning saw and a pistol? What the hell were these people doing? Did they want me to get out alive or not? Well it seems I was determined to get out and had to come up with the solution myself, washing up liquid.

And now all these years on I see afresh something I have chosen to overlook. I have often wondered whether I heard the cuckoo as I dreamed as well as after I dreamed. Do we hear whilst asleep? Did the cuckoo calling bring with it the dream. This was after all the dream of the cuckoo. How about the C[o]ckoo's dream. (Another slip) for what I had in mind was the idea of what it is about the cuckoo that informs this dream. Why not a sparrow or a thrush or a great golden eagle. Remembering I am all persons and all things in my own dreams I am also the cuckoo. Perhaps as I slept I heard a cuckoo calling and what the cuckoo had to bring was a dream. So I let him tell me his dream and he was still calling when I woke. I had simply dreamed the cuckoo's dream. And what he had to

say was as much about being a cuckoo, being cuckoo, as being about a child. Cuckoos place their eggs in other birds nests and let others raise their offspring on the mistaken belief that what they are raising are their own chicks. So the parent cuckoo refrains from making a nest of its own and the cuckoo chick is raised among strangers by parents it does not recognize. It also feels obliged to oust the other chicks from the nest. Strikes me that this is as clear a picture of alienation as it is possible to paint.

I am not supposed to be here, where is my own true nesting place, I do not recognize these parents as my parents or these other fledglings as my brother's or sisters. I am a stranger in a strange land. As such I consider myself to be mad, cuckoo, there is no sense in all of this. One flew over the Cuckoo's nest indeed. It is also the dream of the cuckold. The one who understands cheating, who can be both the cheat and the one who is cheated. From the very beginning the cuckoo is cheated of its birthright. Its parents abandon it even before birth. Prematurely orphaned, it is born to strangers. Out of some blind instinct it is reared by parents who do not respond to any sense that something is not right here. Was I raised out of desire or duty, a begrudging response oblivious of my true nature. Perhaps the cuckoo was the only harbinger the only true dream carrier for my dream. I began by feeling cheated, I would learn to cheat and I would be cheated, I am a cheat. The written record of my birth as evidenced by my mother, keeper of the story at that time, records the first words spoken by her and my father. My father said nothing and my mother "ugh isn't he awful". One struck dumb the other disgusted.

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There is a disbelief about what I am writing. Could it really have been this way? Being invited to dismember and shoot myself before I was even in the world and being greeted by silence and revulsion when I did conceive of a way of being born for myself. Perhaps it is really reluctance to believe. And yet there is proof. A book entitled 'The Book of Baby', one of those sentimental volumes, mine with a drawing of a stork on the front, bought by or for new parents to record the significant details of the life of the child. In answer to the pre-printed questions, there are the answers in my mother's manuscript. I have to believe that not only were these things said or not said but that she must have been recording faithfully. I conclude this from a feeling that no right minded parent should have made this remark in the first place and having done so should have had the grace to keep it to herself rather than place it down as the opening salutation to a first born child. And yet it is the very act of writing which suggests its authenticity. Perversely the fact that she does not seem to have been aware of the possible impact or careless of the effect is corroborative of the response she truly experienced to my appearance.

I was to set off into the world with the words 'isn't he awful' ringing in my ears. It is true that I was awful in the eyes of my mother and my appearance evinced no response whatsoever from my father. 'Oh come on!' you will say, no day old child remembers or even understands the words spoken to it on that opening day. Perhaps, perhaps not, but see the remark and the silence as a metaphorical or symbolic and where does that lead. They speak of an initial stance which was to become the leitmotif for a life yet to be lived. In mother's case (a word chosen for someone on trial, not chosen consciously) I have often wondered what it was about her, and with the possible exception of the youngest, her other sisters as well, which engendered in them such an antagonistic attitude to men. True, they all married and two of them had a single child each.

Outwardly they appeared to love and be devoted to their spouses and yet I never felt that what I experienced bore out the appearance. What I sensed instead was a profound contempt which lay not far beneath the surface and which from time to time emerged in unguarded moments. At such times men were degraded, humiliated, castrated and annihilated often with nothing more than a word or a look.

I have speculated on how come this may have come about and there are some tempting and easy probabilities. The truth is I will probably never know, there will be no evidence to corroborate the story. I will need to keep faith with the body of evidence offered to me by my own body. Instead of seeking to produce a file of statements, from independent witnesses, which could be assessed and decided upon as to whether there is case to answer, I need to hold fast to the knowledge that the evidence is not out there, but in here, in my body. More importantly perhaps I must keep on reminding myself that not only does the body of evidence come from within but that the judge also sits within. Evaluation of a life consists of judging for oneself about oneself. It is not of course carried out in a vacuum but the only conclusions which are valid are those drawn by the person themselves. This is part of the function of memoir, not only to tell the story, but to draw from it the conclusions which are valid and necessary. This is accountability.

For several years now I have suffered from a condition which the medical profession call a syndrome. Irritable Bowel Syndrome, affectionately known as IBS, for short it can bring ruin to a life and has certainly had a profound effect upon mine. There are plenty of resources about the condition all of which end at the same point. No one knows what it is or what causes it or how to cure it. There is a whole industry grown up around it including suggestions as to how to live with it or manage it. The word syndrome seems to be the doctors way of saying that they admit there is something which they can characterize by scoring from a list of anecdotal symptoms which are revealed by sufferers. Since however it has no apparent medical cause it is not treated as a disease and is further sidelined by giving it a psychological component which is another way of saying that it is a mystery. My own doctor has it. Recently, no doubt like other sufferers who are always keeping an eye open for a way out, a cure, I came across a piece of research suggesting it may be linked to a virus known as MAP. This virus is now thought to cause Crohn's disease but there is a growing body of opinion which is wondering whether it may also be linked to IBS as well. Of course on one level I would love for this to be true and for someone to come up with an antidote. What interests me personally is that MAP comes from cows milk and finds its way into the human body by the drinking of that milk. E-mailing the leading researcher in the field with a few lines of my story, including the fact that I was raised on a dairy farm, he confidently asserts in a swift reply that I have certainly got the virus and his words 'it will have been there since I was a lad'.

I remain thoroughly sceptical and paradoxically hopeful. What interests me on another level altogether is what is revealed by this detour. My condition which has no definite point of origin but which I could state might be of ten years standing means that I did not show any signs of it until I was in my mid forties. The notion that it was there all along is intriguing. Laid down in my body by the ingestion of that most basic of all foods, milk. In the shadow of taking in that substance, which we are assured at all times is good for us, I am poisoned. This I believe is how our lives, my life, can be mapped. On the face of it there is apparent nourishment and sustenance being offered and what is really happening is something quite other. And the milk of course will not only have found its way to me direct from the cow but also via the breast milk from mother. She will have

taken in the milk in the form of cow's milk and given it out as breast milk. The whole theory of MAP may well turn out to be humbug, yet another interesting but ultimately fruitless pursuit. But it has alerted me to how we can be poisoned in ways which appear innocent, even beneficial, but turn out to be deadly.

I have no particular clear or profound memories of my early years but I do remember the byre at the farm and my recollections must have been from a time before I was going to school. As a young male the mystery of the byre was fundamental. The structure is formal. There are stalls, each taking a pair of cows arranged down one wall. There is a door at the west end through which the cows enter and leave and doors on the north and south sides opposite each other half way along. These are for human traffic and they split the row of stalls roughly in half. The door to the north gives onto the farm yard and the one to the south to the half enclosed fold yard behind and the buildings where hay and feed are stored. There is room for about thirty cattle in all. The floor is concrete with a sunken channel running all the way down the centre just behind where the cows rear feet stand when they are tethered. The cows therefore are standing on a raised platform. There are water bowls in each stall which are operated by a valve which the cows learn to push with their noses to release water. Attached to an iron restraining ring set into the concrete partitions is a cow chain. This is made of two sections, one passing over the cows neck and the other underneath. One end of the chain has a circular bolt ring the other a T-bar which is passed through the ring thereby making the necklace.

Twice a day every day of the year, year after year, the same service takes place. The cattle if they are not inside already during the winter months will be fetched in from whatever field in which they are held. Heavy with milk they move slowly yet determinedly. They roll and sway, as if at sea managing a slight swell. Full udders slap against hind legs. Sometimes they seem to walk bow legged at the back to accommodate this huge liquid ballast. Their manners are appalling and they have no concept of queueing. Jostling towards the byre and the food they can smell inside, they try to force their way through the doors by twos when only one will fit. The mass of bodies behind grows denser, a complaint is heard from the back and suddenly the noise begins to thicken. The soft slapping, the hard hooves striking cobbles and concrete. The indescribable noise of huge bodies coming into contact with one another. Once inside they know their places, their names appear written above the stalls. Often one forgets or takes a fancy to another stall for the day and there is chaos as reversing, three point turns, cajoling and beatings restore order. Cows have a lousy turning circle.

The theatre becomes a stage upon which every sense is alerted. The noise continues to mount. Chains rattle as they are slung round necks and the eyes threaded. As the chewing of cow cake or hay from the troughs begins a rhythm starts to beat. Chewing matches chains matches chewing. An occasional low brings in the wind section. More chains as a neck is shaken to dislodge a fly. The smells are also building all the time. Thirty huge bodies giving off their odour, in cold weather a mist begins and turns into a thick fog as breath mixes with sweat with saliva with water in the bowls. Almost every beast will defecate or urinate or both in the hour or so they are being milked. A slight hunching of the spine, the lifting of the tail are warning signs to move away from the firing range. These huge creatures produce massive quantities of soft watery dung. Falling from a height of four feet or so it depends on whether its landing area is dry or already awash with urine. If wet it can send splashes up the whitewashed wall six feet away. If dry it might just land in a soft heap, an island as the river of urine starts to flood

around slowing eroding its edges. The stench becomes overwhelming filling the nose and throat. There is a tendency to wretch but the acid tartness is mingled with a sweetness which prevents nausea.

This incense of the byre is as heady as any musk swung in a censer. It calls and chokes, clings and cloys and then comes the milk. Two pails with warm soapy water and udder cloths are moved from stall to stall to wash udders and teats, to clean of dirt and grease. Steam is now swirling everywhere in the air carrying all the smells with it. Glistening teats are aching, some begin to ooze spontaneously and white milk curdles with the acidic urine on the floor. When I first used to go up and watch 'the milking' it was still done by hand. Tails were tied up. A cow's tail heavy with matted faeces unleashed to deal with a fly is a vicious whip capable of stinging the face of the seated milker and blinding an eye. Those cows known to be 'kickers' might have their hind legs hobbled. Cows can only kick in a forward motion but this can upset stool, milker, pail and milk and cause severe bruising. A hand is placed on the spine at the base of the tail, a few encouraging scratches there is supposed to soothe the creature, maybe a few coaxing words as the stool is set down. It was more often than not the men who did the milking, The hands employed to do all the mechanical and heavy work were here doing milkmaids work. Their caps were turned peak backwards as their brows rested into the side of the animal in the hollow in the flank. Teats were tested to check they were not damaged and were giving clear milk and then the first pull hit the bottom of the empty pail with a clear ring. Like a peal set away the bells began a steady swishing. The milker began to sway side to side as his hands warmed his shoulders going up and down as the teats are pulled and squeezed down in turn. The second man sits at his stool and the session acquires a second sound. They begin to swing into harmony. The beast seem to respond, there is a gentle settling all round. The service is under way.

A cow is finished and the milker rises with his bucket and goes to the scales. These hang on a hook from a beam and have a hook over which the bucket handle is hooked. The spring balance swings and steadies and a figure is penciled into a column on the milk sheet on the wall, Buttercup's yield for this morning's milking. The bucket is emptied into a metal churn which stands about as high as me set against the back wall and the milker sets down again with empty pail. The risings and fallings, the swinging to and fro, the pourings into one vessel then into another follow a set pattern, the cows being milked in the same order each day. Routine rhythm, a steady reliable holding. A rocking as sure as any cradle.

And all the time the edge of danger. Only a slip away a moment of inattention an irritating fly setting a beast on edge. A kick can lead to a spill, a curse, the head butted into the beast's side as a reminder to behave. Sometimes a temper lost and a stick employed in revenge for a bump or a toe crushed by a foot. I would be fascinated in the byre. Stood against the back wall out of the way just watching and listening and smelling. I hated most the loosing of the cows when the milking was over. They had to back out of their stall down the step behind turn and make their way out of the door by which they came. The floor by this time is perilous. More slippery than ice, running with a slick of urine, faeces and milk the hooves slide at will. A leg goes out and a knee is bent. A bone jars the concrete floor as the cow tries to right itself like some demented skater trying ice for the first time. A relief when all these great creatures are safely away and steady again on the yard outside. It is over until the next time.

Its hard to imagine now how huge a cow was to me in those days. Looming over me they gave off a sense of weight and sheer bulk which was overwhelming and potentially dangerous. Massive liquid eyes looked down and seemed as big as my face. A nose as big as my head, ears I couldn't fit into my little hands and a face as long as tomorrow. The body must have weighed more than I could have imagined but I was sure if it fell on me it would kill me.

6 14/11/03 False Starts.

In an attempt to seek some form, some arrangement, some way of organizing, classifying, bringing into relationship the various parts of writing which I have undertaken so far I have decided to put together as a first movement the four draft proposals and a piece called 'First Review'.

One possible way of treating these five pieces would be to draw out the themes which can be discerned, try to set them out in a clear way summarizing what has been achieved. Another obvious method suggests itself. Arrange them chronologically and analyse what has taken place developmentally, charting the progress along the way. Both approaches to some degree or another involve a combination of précis and summary and both would no doubt be fruitful.

Another way might be to try and write one piece which represents the salient features of all five pieces. This would be editorial work and could be used as a clarification exercise showing that after two years my mind has cleared and the direction of the piece, its trajectory, has emerged. This is the plan from now on and this is what needs to be achieved. That this is the methodology I will employ to reach my destination. Such an exercise might produce what has come to be the accepted method of commencing the written PhD, namely an abstract. A short piece designed to produce a summary or epitome, indicating the ideas and notions to be considered, the ground to be covered and the chosen method of travel.

Such an approach is possible but undesirable. Undesirable because it is untrue. Not totally untrue but certainly substantially so. True because there are ideas which I desire to pursue, even thoughts of how I would like to go about the exploration. These appear already in the five pieces mentioned. Military analysts are eager to remind us that there are no plans, however well made, that survive the first engagement of real battle. Keats wrote a long letter to John Hamilton Reynolds in May of 1818 in which he observed that:

Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses.

GIT p 93

Set alongside Keats's famous statement of what he termed 'Negative Capability':

That is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts,
without any irritable reaching after fact & reason. GIT p 43

the inference is that the creative process is not simple to understand or define. Poesis, the activity of making, is uncertain. The imagination is not susceptible to confinement or description, indeed Keats tells us it 'cannot refer to any standard law'. The notion of setting down in advance how a creative process will proceed seems, on one level, absurd.

And yet it is also true to say that the majority of creative enterprises do not simply spring out of thin air but do embark from a position where there exists some degree of organization. The trick, if there is one, seems to consist of remaining true to the work during a process over which the maker does not have total control. A large part of why the control can not be total is that any process which involves the unconscious has a degree of anarchy stirred into the mix. There is a question here which has been begged. Does the creative process always or invariably, involve the unconscious?

To the majority of writers, sculptors, composers, makers of art in whatever form, such a question may appear rhetorical. The existence and role of the unconscious is simply taken for granted. This does not necessarily mean however that makers have explored or understood what is involved in the proposition that the unconscious plays a part in the making, or indeed in their lives in general. Freud's assertion that there are more people who believe in the existence of miracles than accept the existence of the unconscious remains true today. The unconscious remains a source of tension. Keats's notion of 'Negative Capability' is simply another way of stating this proposition. Keats by inviting us to be in 'uncertainties, mysteries and doubts' is setting out that there are parts of making and living which we cannot fully manage. What he does do however is to offer us a clue as to how we may relate to these rogue elements.

When he speaks of testing an axiom on the pulse he is offering an avenue. The pulse is both literal and metaphorical. He means us to use this bodily function to examine a philosophical proposition. If we ask our pulse to test an idea he is suggesting it is capable of carrying out reliable investigation and confirming or otherwise the hypothesis. The body becomes the proving ground. The pulse stands for the physical body as a whole and in turn that physical body expands into a notion of the world body. The body of work, that which is being made, is tested against the physical body. Firstly against the pulse and body of the maker and then more widely against what the individual knows and can sense of the wider body. In this wider sense the individual stands not only for himself or herself but as representative of the whole. His pulse also beats for the wider body of the world.

However the test which Keats proposes, the testing against the pulse, is in itself, no more a complete answer to what goes on in a creative process than any other single proposition. Indeed it is misleading to suggest that any such exercise is possible. Nina Coltart, a British Psychoanalyst, writes an intriguing essay to open her book entitled 'Slouching Towards Bethlehem'. In 'Thinking the Unthinkable in Psychoanalysis' she proposes that the work of analysis is uncertain:

It is of the essence of our impossible profession that in a very singular way we do not know what we are doing. p 2

She speaks of the 'anarchic depths of the unconscious' and after considering all the training which analysts undergo she concludes. p 2

All of these daily operations are the efficient, skillful and thinkable tools with which we constantly approach the heart of our work, which is a mystery.

I suggest her view that analysis is an impossible mystery is true for the creative process also. As makers we train, we learn the skills appropriate to our chosen arts. Then we set about the making of the work. At that point we no longer know what we are doing, because we have chosen to enter a terrain which can never fully be mastered by our skills and training, however thorough. Yeats observes that 'Style is almost unconscious. I know what I have tried to do, little what I have done'. (Strong Words p 28). He is aware that whilst he knew what it was he sought to achieve he has to admit that in going through the actual process of creation involves a submission to unknowing as much as to knowing.

In a sense a question might be posed as to whether abstract is the right word to introduce a creative piece or whether the word distract is not just as appropriate. The distinction between the two words is slight but crucial. Abstract meaning 'to draw from' whilst distract indicates 'a drawing apart'. Abstracting suggests an operation of mind in which a degree of consciousness is maintained allowing for the deliberate extraction of significance. The one who abstracts is aware of what is going on, able to make separations and withdrawals, to disengage from and look at what is occurring. Although a meaning of 'absence of mind' is also allowed the word generally connotes a concentration of the mind in which consciousness predominates. Also the body or object from which the abstraction is made remains, whilst the abstract comes into being as a distinct piece of work.

On the other hand to distract brings with it the crucial elements of sundering, separating, diverting, harassing, going even as far as deranging. Whilst some consciousness remains the emphasis shifts from active conscious control, going to extremes, as far as the states of craziness or madness. So meanings include; to confuse, to perplex, to cause dissension or disorder, to throw into a state of mind in which one does not know how to act, to derange the intellect of, to drive mad. So for the perplexed and confused maker who cries out that this piece, this book, this sculpture, this composition is driving him mad, is appropriately describing the state of distraction. At other times in the process of making the same maker may be able to draw from the work its significance, to withdraw and observe the process in which he is engaged, to see where he and the work are going. At such times he is abstracting.

It seems to me that it is not so much a question of choice as to whether an abstract or a distract is the appropriate way of introducing a creative piece but more the recognition that both are essential. Vitally, it is the tension created between them that gives life to the piece.

At this point in time I have written eleven separate pieces. Although each piece so far has a distinct existence and title it may be possible to identify an emerging classification. In terms of genre there are pieces which could be described as memoir; *The Farming Grandfather*, *The Mining Grandfather*, *Grandmother Armory*, *Paternal Grandmother*, others are more autobiographical; *Mother's Death*, *Going Down*, *Childhood 1*, *Behind The Stone*, some are discrete meditations upon an idea or theme which has emerged along the way, perhaps they are diversions or tangents; *Honour and Grace*, *Soulmaking*. Lastly there are pieces which are hybrids; *Opencast* and *The Family Tree*. Almost small essays expanding upon themes which have arisen from the other pieces. These parts look at 'The Family' in its wider terms and 'The Land' not only as the literal home for the protagonists but as the vessel or the body which carries all within.

In terms of style or treatment, selection of voice, again there is variety. The work of memoir has involved editorial work with primary sources from family archives, diaries, letters, and papers. These sources have not simply been quoted or sequenced but there is speculation as to what was going on at the time and questions raised about what was not said or written as much as what was disclosed. So absence is as interesting as presence. Sometimes the voice is first person and sometimes it is third person. This raises questions, difficulties even, over tonal quality. Does the lack of consistency jar or is it legitimate to suggest that different content calls for different treatment. Would the desire to experiment with the second person merely cause even further difficulties? The question of whether the fifty or so poems which have taken up the last two or three months of tutorial time, belong in the work at all, has yet to be answered.

Currently there is a lack of order in the sense that the pieces neither proceed chronologically, developmentally or as narrative, in the sense of telling a story with a beginning a middle and an end. At a recent book group discussion on J.M. Coetzee's 'Boyhood' one member was complaining that she could not discern any pattern or structure in the book. Another was suggesting there was a structure but it was not easily explainable in conventional terms. He suggested that because the work was concerned with the development and emergence of a young life so the structure itself was also developing and emerging. Another member saw patterns in the way that the main protagonist was seen in relationship to the characters, primarily his mother and father, and also in relation to the land, particularly the farm belonging to this father's family. So J.M. Coetzee kept placing the boy in different settings and in so doing allowed us to deduce from his reactions to the settings his emerging character. The subtitle to the book is 'scenes from a provincial life'. Scenes is apt for it connotes the unfolding drama, in this case the unfolding of a young life. However the sense in the book is that rather than the drama following a script, the script emerges out of the scenes.

Perversity suggests there needs to be an allowance for 'Relevant And Helpful Interruptions In The Making Of A Piece'. I have just taken a phone call from my partner in which I was trying to tell her what I was writing about and she in turn responded with an observation in which she made a 'Freudian slip'. When I used the phrase 'Freudian slip' back to her she said she preferred to think of these moments as slips of the unconscious and did not wish to give Freud full credit for them. She went on to say "In fact I would like to put the phrase 'Freudian slip' into room 201". After we had recovered from our laughter over the complex and perverse ways in which the 'anarchic' unconscious will have its way with us I was left amazed at how in those very moments when we struggle for mastery and to impose our will and to create from (ah ha) form and order we are tumbled by the jester that is our unconscious. I was also delighted by a story she related which she had heard on the radio the day before. The programme was about codes in history and apparently in earlier times one method of delivering a message was to shave the head of the messenger and to tattoo the message in code onto the skull, let the hair grow back and then send the messenger on his way for shaving and revelation at the other end. The notion of the body carrying the message in this manner is fascinating to me particularly in view of my feelings about how we carry the message of our life in our body but that often we do not even know that we carry a message, it is certainly often concealed and invariably encoded in a symbolic way that we need to decipher. Of course as well as carrying the code we also, again often without knowing, also carry the key.

Moments such as these seem to reinforce for me the futility of trying to define with any degree of certainty the creative endeavour, particularly in advance.

Notes

¹ The title is from John Donne's poem *Ecstasy*, the penultimate verse of which reads:

To our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.

The Poems of John Donne. Ed. J.C. Grierson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912, p. 51

² A.S. Byatt speaks of a similar moment when describing the effect upon her of reading a collection of short stories by David Constantine: 'Reading them is a series of short shocks of (agreeably envious) pleasure'. 'On The Cusp', *Guardian Review*, 18/06/05, p. 9. Also Alice Oswald about Ted Hughes: 'The first Ted Hughes poem I ever read was 'The Horses'. I picked it up one evening after work, and I was instantly drawn in. I could feel the poem's effect physically, as if my brain cells had been shaken and woken'. 'Wild Things' *Guardian Review* 3/12/05, p. 21. At the time of writing the phrase 'like a trace laid down in my viscera', I had no knowledge of the idea of 'somatic memory'. Now I would see the fact of 'bodily memory' as having a scientific foundation, especially with the work of Bessel van der Kolk, Professor of Psychiatry at Boston University Medical School, who sees it as a human phenomenon. (see p. 42)

³ David Constantine, *Translation is Good for You*. Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2004, p. 9

⁴ The notion of one body being able to empathise with another body on a purely physical level is noted by Susie Orbach in *The Impossibility of Sex*. See particularly pp. 204-208

⁵ Andrew Motion, *Keats*. London: Faber & Faber, 1997, p. 111

⁶ Such an idea is not confined to poets. Referring to Handel during the writing of *The Messiah*: 'his manservant reported that his master appeared to be in a trance during its composition'. Richard Yates in the programme notes to the Northern Sinfonia's production of *The Messiah* at The Sage, Gateshead, Dec, 2005.

⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1994.

⁸ For Bachelard it would seem the *katokoche* can be experienced by the reader as well as the writer. For an explanation of *katokoche* see p. 41

⁹ Germaine Greer writing about Paula Rego, comments: 'It is the image not the event that must compel, and to compel it must resist explanation. It must say something that words cannot. It must resist control'. *Untamed by Age*. *Guardian Review* 20/11/04, pp. 18-19

¹⁰ Mourid Bargouti, qtd in: 'Occupational Hazards', in the 'Lives and Letters' series, *Guardian Review*, 4/9/04, p. 28. There are echoes here of what Merleau-Ponty has to say later about the world and the person not being separate.

¹¹ Here Bachelard offers us a footnote by way of explanation:

Charles Nodier, *Dictionnaire raisonné des onomatopées françaises*, Paris 1828, p. 46 "The different names for the soul, among nearly all peoples, are just so many breath variations, and onomatopoeic expressions of breathing". xx.

¹² One recalls Wordsworth's comment that poetry 'takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity'. *Lyrical Ballads*. 1801. 2nd Edition, Preface. Eagleton in his chapter on psychoanalysis quotes the American critic Norman N Holland who sees literature as setting up a tension between unconscious fantasies and conscious defences against them and goes on to describe this as a restatement of the Romantic opposition between turbulent content and harmonizing form. See Eagleton's *Literary Theory*, p. 182

¹³ There is an exploration of the notion of reverberation in Chapter 4, 'Down The Far Wires'.

¹⁴ Bani Shorter, *Susceptible to the Sacred*. London: Routledge, 1996.

¹⁵ It is tempting to draw a parallel between these two worlds and the two hemispheres of Jaynes's bicameral mind, which is considered in the next chapter.

¹⁶ I see whilst on a holiday, that as a personal note, I wrote for myself on 8/5/03: 'The process of making a piece of art is the same as becoming a person. I am the work in progress'. Describing the process of writing *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Carlo Levi observed about his own experience: 'The process developed in successive books, changing the author's spirit and body and words while in a period explosive with new awareness other men also changed'. p.7

¹⁷ Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p. 49

¹⁸ At an intensive writing workshop held at High Green, Tarsset, in Northumberland, 2004, noted in the author's personal journal. Compare Wordsworth's list of what he calls 'the powers requisite for the production of poetry' where 'Invention' occurs as fifth on his list. In 'Preface to the Edition of 1815', *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, London: Oxford University Press, Ed Thomas Hutchinson, 1960, p.752

¹⁹ Henri Poincaré, 'Mathematical Creation' from *The Foundations of Science*. trans G.B.Halstead, Science Press, 1924, qtd in *Creativity*. Ed P.E.Vernon, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, pp 77-88

²⁰ A comment made to students at a writing workshop held at Newcastle upon Tyne University. Noted in the author's personal journal.

²¹ Parallels occur with what Woolf has to say later about the 'marriages' made by words; see p 105

²² The lines from Ivor Gurney's *The Love Song* come to mind:

Out of the blackthorn edges
I caught a tune
And before it could vanish, seized
It, wrote it down

Collected Poems of Ivor Gurney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 194

It is said: "According to a story, Rilke heard in the wind the first lines of his elegies when he was walking, in the rocks above the sea". From a biography of Rilke by Petri Liukkonen at <http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/rainer-Maria-Rilke/3165/comments>. The first line is "Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the hierarchies of the Angels".

²³ William Butler Yeats, *Yeats's Poems*. Ed. A Norman Jeffares. London: Macmillan, 1989, p 294

²⁴ Nina Coltart, *Slouching towards Bethlehem*. London: Free Association Books, 1993.

²⁵ The notion that not every question is susceptible of an easy or quick answer is considered by Rilke: "Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live the questions now*. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer". Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Letters To A Young Poet*. Trans. Stephen Mitchell, New York, Vintage Books, 1986, p. 34. Saramago makes a similar observation in *Blindness*: 'For the first time she asked herself if she had some good reason for wanting to go on living. She could find no reply, replies do not always come when needed, and it often happens that the only possible reply is to wait for them'. 247.

²⁶ I find myself using the word ‘intriguing’ repeatedly. I have the sense of it as meaning beguiling and enchanting rather than underhand or deceitful. Perhaps more could have been said about the beguiling effect upon me of writing this PhD.

²⁷ D.M.Thomas in an article about *The White Hotel* said: ‘The idea for the novel sprang at me one morning in my cell’. [‘cell’, his room behind New College Oxford, while on sabbatical]. Guardian Review 28/8/04, pp. 4-6. Likewise Anne Stevenson writing about her very first poem when she was ten: “Just a few lines which suddenly came to me after I spotted the flash of a red-winged blackbird by one of Michigan’s small lakes. Real poems have mostly arrived unbidden like this ever since, caught in the corner of my eye, like that bird”. ‘Border Crossings’, Interview with Alfred Hickling, Guardian Review, 2/10/04, pp. 20-23

²⁸ The word for agony in Greek was *agonistes*, as in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. For the Greeks the word also meant ‘one who takes part in the games, in particular a wrestler’. Also see what Michael Donaghy has to say in ‘My Report Card’, about the idea of a presence being sensed at times of intense creativity, at p. 243 of *Strong Words*.

²⁹ The metaphor of ‘stepping out’ is at the heart of Derek Mahon’s poem *Aran*, which is considered in some detail in Chapter 4.

³⁰ A.S. Byatt, *Soul Searching*. Guardian Review, 14/2/04, p. 4

³¹ There is another example of the weaving metaphor in Walter Benjamin’s *Illuminations*, London: Pimlico, 1999 as he describes ‘The Image of Proust’: “We know that in his work Proust did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. And yet even this statement is imprecise and far too crude. For the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection. Or should one call it, rather, a Penelope work of forgetting”. 198.

³² Wilson Harris, *Resurrection at Sorrow Hill*. London: Faber & Faber, 1993, p. 147

³³ Adam Schwartzman, a South African poet, also speaks of the body’s relationship to the world: “The world’s entry into the body is the body’s entry into the world. What takes place in the world at large, and the concerns of a private life are very often indistinguishable. What we bring to the world, and what the world brings to us, merge into each other, the origins of sensation leveled in the distillation into words”. Qtd in ‘Breaking with the past’. Charles Bainbridge, Guardian Review, 23/10/04, p.25

³⁴ Parallels can be drawn between some of the images encountered in the chapter; *Moby-Dick*’s skeletal temple in the heart of the landscape, Keats’s Penetrarium, the cage at the centre of my own dream with its woven mesh-like sides, the metaphor of Sherrington’s ‘enchanted loom’, all share the interweaving, interpenetrative qualities which I feel lie so deep within the creative process.

³⁵ Charles Bainbridge in his review of the South African poet Adam Schwartzman’s *Book of Stones*, quotes from a Schwartzman poem:

Maybe you don’t have to
know why,
you must just admit

since the heart’s fist
will not always unclench

maybe you don’t have to
know why,
you must just admit

since the seams were too deep
in your anatomy for reason.

³⁶ Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error*. New York: Avon Books, 1994.

³⁷ In psychotherapy the body is also making a return. In an article in the journal 'Counselling and Psychotherapy' CPJ, for May 2003, Nick Totton, author of *Body Psychotherapy: An Introduction*, highlights the need to work with 'neither the mind alone, nor the body alone, but the *bodymind*'. The article also looks at recent scientific findings which he calls 'the current revolution in neuroscience which supports many of body psychotherapy's central principles'. CPJ May 2003, pp. 8-12

³⁸ Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976, p. 361

³⁹ Daniel Dennet is Professor of Philosophy at Tufts University and a proponent of Neural Darwinism. His *Content and Consciousness* adopts a bipartite approach to a philosophy of the mind making a distinction between content and consciousness. Steven Pinker is Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology at Harvard and he suggests an evolutionary mental mode for language. He believes language to be an instinct.

⁴⁰ Often schizophrenics will describe the voices which they hear as having 'told them to do something', bearing out the executive nature of the voices as described by Jaynes. It is interesting that Eagleton observes "Schizophrenic language has in this sense an interesting resemblance to poetry". *Literary Theory*, p.159

⁴¹ The use of 'is said' gives a mythic quality to the event, whether it is true or not. We want it to be so, we resist not knowing, like the elusive Freud quote there is a part of us seeking substantiation. Even verisimilitude will do perhaps, the appearance of a truth if nothing else.

⁴² Eagleton is simple on this point, as he explains how, for Lacan the unconscious is outside of us and an effect of language: "Language always pre-exists us: it is always already 'in place', waiting to assign us *our* places within it". *Literary Theory*, p. 172

⁴³ 'Dark practice' reverberates with what was said earlier about possible meanings of 'other'. See p 19

⁴⁴ Mary Beard in a review of Lindsay Clarke's *The War at Troy* makes a parallel point. 'When he [Paris] walked off with Helen in other words, he was in a sense, doing what the gods had ordained. The Trojan war was a consequence of divine meddling in human affairs.' Guardian Review, 19/6/04, p.26

⁴⁵ Plato *Republic*. Trans, Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

⁴⁶ Brad Pitt playing Achilles in the recent movie, *Troy*, offers an interesting portrayal of the noble automaton. He speaks little, acts without hesitation and is virtually free from self questioning or self reflection. It seems less important whether Jaynes's theory of the bicameral mind holds up, what seems more certain is that this was the way the Iliadic mind operated. It was the theory of consciousness at that time, and by the time of Plato it was starting to break down.

⁴⁷ This recalls the earlier discussion on the meaning of *inventio*.

⁴⁸ Ann Ulanov, 'Jung and Religion: the opposing Self', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung*. Eds. Polly Young-Eisendrath & Terence Dawson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 306

⁴⁹ Plato *Ion*: in 'Classical Literary Criticism' Eds. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1998.

⁵⁰ Henry V's famous speech before the walls of Harfleur comes to mind. There are times when specific modes of action are appropriate to particular situations:

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man

As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger

Henry V, III i 1

⁵¹ It is interesting to note that Bani Shorter's book which is considered elsewhere is entitled, *Susceptible to the Sacred*.

⁵² The word 'Wraith [s]' appears as the title of one of my poems and certainly I am aware that it seemed problematical to me, although I chose to retain it.

⁵³ Shakespeare was aware of the ecstatic nature of the writer:

The poet's eye, eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them into shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

A Midsummer Night's Dream. IV i 12-17

Shakespeare uses 'bodies' in an interesting way here.

⁵⁴ Babbette Rothschild, *The Body Remembers*. New York: W.N.Norton & Company, 2000.

⁵⁵ Peter Levine who has pioneered a form of therapeutic healing known as 'Somatic Experiencing' draws on the fact that prey animals, although they have a physiology close to humans, do not suffer from stress after the trauma of being hunted.

⁵⁶ van der Kolk, B. A., McFarlane, A.C. & Weisaeth, L. Eds. *Traumatic Stress*. New York: Guildford, 1996. qtd in Rothschild, p. 22

⁵⁷ It is interesting to speculate on whether this is explicit or implicit memory which Spender is describing. It certainly sounds more like implicit.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated*. London: Penguin, 2002, p. 198 For comparison see the experiment with the tack in the palm which Rothschild describes in *The Body Remembers*, p. 33

⁵⁹ Carlos Fuentes, Extract from: 'This I Believe'. Trans. Kristina Cordero, in *Confederacy of Shadows* Guardian Review, 4/9/04, pp 4-6

⁶⁰ Basil Bunting, *Complete Poems*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 47

⁶¹ Tobias Hill is succinct: "Anyone can write, just as anyone can sing; it's as if the human body has lyric and narrative chords strung alongside the vocal ones". 'Paperback Writer', Guardian Review, 20/11/04, p. 32

⁶² Pound says: 'There is, however, in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base.' *Strong Words* p. 21

⁶³ In a letter to J.H.Reynolds, 3rd May 1818, Keats writes, 'Axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses:'. GIT 93

⁶⁴ At an open forum with other writers held at Live Theatre in Newcastle. From the author's own journal.

⁶⁵ I am struck here with reverberations to Keats's choice of verisimilitude earlier.

⁶⁶ See in the next chapter the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's work and how it challenges the notions of duality.

⁶⁷ It is interesting to speculate on how conscious I was of this poem when writing my own poem, *On This Bright Spring Morning*.

⁶⁸ Perhaps Pound agrees with Theophrastus, who, according to ER Dodds in *The Greeks and the Irrational*, believed that "hearing is the most emotive of all the senses" p.78

⁶⁹ Mark Ford's article is entitled, *Emerging glorious from the clouds*. Guardian Review, 18/9/04, p.25

⁷⁰ Perhaps it is not so much recollection, to use Wordsworth's word, but practice which enhances the artist's ability to make his art. The more often one carries out an action, the more one reinforces the same repeated neural pathway down which one travels until one builds a body of memory. In this sense memory is made rather than seen.

⁷¹ From *Land of Evening* by Jean Mambrino, trans. Kathleen Raine, Enithamon Press, qtd in The Guardian 26/6/2004.

⁷² It seems impossible to avoid the concluding lines of T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*:

When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

Collected Poems 1909-1962, London, Faber and Faber, 1963 ed, p. 223

⁷³ Don Paterson, *The Dark Art Of Poetry*. The Poetry Library, 2004. pp. 1-9

⁷⁴ David Hare, in *Enter Stage Left*, describes a visceral experience when asking how: 'the chaotic private sector rip-off' which led to the train crashes might be turned into drama. "How on earth would it make a play? Then at the end of the week the bereaved mother of one of those killed in one of the train crashes, came to speak to us. Within a few minutes I began to feel a stirring, a disturbing wave of subterranean energy. In that moment something extraordinary occurred." Guardian Review, 30/10/04, p. 4

⁷⁵ For a useful summary of the reasons why language is inevitably empty and a failure see Eagleton, pp 167-168, where he compares and contrasts Freud, Derrida and Lacan, on desire.

⁷⁶ Compare Wordsworth's thoughts with those of Stephen Spender:

I think continually of those/who were truly great
Who from the womb,/remembered the soul's history
Through corridors of light/where the hours are suns,
Endless and singing. Whose/lovely ambition
Was that their lips, still/touched with fire,
Should tell of the Spirit/clothed from head to foot in song.

'The Truly Great' *Collected Poems.1928-1985, Stephen Spender*. London: Faber & Faber, 1989
p. 30

⁷⁷ This harks back to Wilson Harris and his comments about the reciprocal nature of the work on the maker and vice versa.

⁷⁸ Another explicit use of the word occurs in a short story by Joseph O'Connor *The Playboy of Glengarry*, as he is trying to imagine JM Synge in love: "And then- where can she be? – she materializes through the smoke. there she is, beckoning circumspectly from a second-class window. It is like a small moment out of Tolstoy, perhaps, one of those seemingly simple but reverberating images he values in the novels of Russia". Guardian Review, 23/7/05, p. 2

⁷⁹ Phillip Pulman in *The Amber Spyglass* cleverly distinguishes between an echo and a reverberation without using the word reverberation: "Then Lyra gave a cry so passionate that even in that muffled mist-hung world it raised an echo, but of course it wasn't an echo, it was the other part of her crying in turn from the land of the living as Lyra moved away into the land of the dead." 299. The idea of reverberation taking place within the individual, intra-psychically as it were, is intriguing when one appreciates that we are made up of 'multitudes', as Whitman has pointed out in his *Song of Myself*.

⁸⁰ The gut brain/head brain division is, on one level, just another example of the tendency to make binary divisions. Jaynes's theory of the bicameral mind is one such. Plato in *Republic* has "an internal dialogue between two 'parts' of the soul" (Dodds, p. 213). Dodds goes on "Does this not mean that for Plato the human personality has virtually broken in two? Certainly it is not clear what bond unites or could unite an indestructible daemon resident in the human head with a set of irrational impulses housed in the chest or 'tethered like a beast untamed' in the belly." 214. What reverberation allows is the possibility to explore how more than one set of binary divisions may operate upon, and be reciprocally affected by, the others.

⁸¹ Many schools of meditation consider the area below the navel to be the source of a form of creative energy and breathing into that part of the body is encouraged. Called the 'hara' by the Japanese the 'Tan-Den' by the Koreans and the Dan Tien by the Chinese this centre is considered to be just as influential as the brain. Dodds is also interesting when he writes about the 'belly-talkers' or pythons of the Classical Age in Greece. These were persons, who 'prophesised in a state of possession' speaking with a 'second voice inside them'. Such voices, Dodds says, sound stentorous [snoring] and that the quality can be heard in modern 'trance mediums'. See p 72 and note 52, p 89. The snoring, sleep, trance metaphor is obvious perhaps.

⁸² On a personal note it must be said that despite an earlier invitation from a supervisor I have only read Merleau-Ponty in the last few weeks as this thesis draws to its conclusion. In some ways this seems fortuitous. If I had known earlier what I know now the whole process would have been different and many of the discoveries stumbled upon along the way would no doubt have been revealed sooner, certainly differently. Nevertheless it has been intriguing to discover some corroboration for some earlier held thoughts. It reminds me of David Hare's remark quoted earlier: 'You know it and you don't'.

⁸³ Hermione Lee asks this question very simply in 'Prone to Fancy', an article on Virginia Woolf, "Why does literature always insist on separating the mind. or the soul, from the body?" *Guardian Review* 18/12/04, p.36. Another slightly different view is offered by Simon McBurney: "The body has its own rules, its own patterns, rarely coinciding with what the mind has already decided". 'Lost in chaos' *Guardian Review*, 22/5/04, p.21

⁸⁴ Seamus Heaney writing about Wordsworth says: 'He is an indispensable figure in the evolution of modern writing, a finder and a keeper of the self-as-subject, a theorist and apologist whose Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) remains definitive'. *Guardian Review*, 11/2/06, 21. There is also here a parallel to Merleau-Ponty and his idea of self as subject.

⁸⁵ Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

⁸⁶ Contrast A.S.Byatt who describes Wordsworth as 'essentially pagan ... whom Blake called 'the natural man rising up against the spiritual'. *Unruly Times*, p.58

⁸⁷ Keats has something similar to say in a letter to his brother George and his wife dated 17-27/9/1819. 'You speak of Lord Byron and me – There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees -- I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task. You see the immense difference' GIT p 314

⁸⁸ As we have seen from Plato's recognition of the *katokoche*, the possession by divine madness, the notion of the mind being influenced is not new. Perhaps what The Romantics were offering was the idea that this is the way the mind is rather than it being influenced or taken over by external forces. Perhaps they foreshadow Merleau-Ponty's view, already quoted, that: "Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself". Personally, I find the idea of the divine, for example, being inherent in the psyche, more appealing than the idea of external forces which come to visit.

⁸⁹ To the author during supervision. Noted in the author's personal journal.

⁹⁰ For what Keats had to say about the Mansion of Many Apartments see his letter to J H Reynolds, 3/5/1818. GIT pp 90-97

⁹¹ Donna Tart mentions childhood memory in 'heaven on a hummingbird's wing': "It has been remarked that a poet's most powerful, passionate metaphors – the ones that recur again and again, the ones that carry the deepest personal meaning – are fixed irrevocably in the mind before the age of twelve". Guardian Review, 2/10/04, p. 7

⁹² Maya Jaggi in an article about Jeanette Winterson says that when she was a girl: 'She learned by heart tranches of the Bible (whose rhythms can be heard in her prose)'. *Redemption Songs*. Guardian Review, 29/5/04, p. 22

⁹³ Anne Karpf, Extract from, *The Human Voice*. Bloomsbury, 2000. In The Guardian G2, 6/6/06, pp. 14-17

⁹⁴ Acknowledgement is due for ideas in this paragraph to an article by Kevin Foley at: <http://www.uvm.edu/theview/article.php?id=1539> where he uses this phrase and reviews Nash's book. Quotation references in the section are from Foley's online article. Chapter 6, although written previously, has been revised as a result of my reading about Nash's ideas.

⁹⁵ The psychologist D.W. Winnicott endorses this idea: 'It is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self'. Winnicott, D.W., *Playing and Reality*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1971, p.54

⁹⁶ The power of stories is highlighted by Philip Pulman in *The Amber Spyglass* as he advises how to deal with a procession of ghosts: "Tell them stories. That's what we didn't know. All this time, and we never knew! But they need the truth. That's what nourishes them. You must tell them true stories, and everything will be well, everything. Just tell them stories." p 455.

⁹⁷ Nash does give credit to his reading of Richard Rorty's essay *Trotsky and the Wild Orchids* as having inspired his ideas on the SPN.

⁹⁸ In view of what is said elsewhere about poetry and prose I recall that I was also writing stories at the same age but had forgotten this.

⁹⁹ As an example of juvenilia finding its way into a collection, see Basil Bunting's *The Song Of The Ackworth Clock* and *Keep Troth*, which he wrote at school and which eventually appeared in his Collected Poems as an appendix.

¹⁰⁰ Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*. London: Vintage, 1995.

¹⁰¹ Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* makes an interesting observation about the heroic past: "Past ages have a great and often puzzling attraction for men's imagination. Whenever they are dissatisfied with their present surroundings they turn back to the past and hope that they will now be able to prove the truth of the unextinguishable dream of a golden age. They are still probably under the spell of their childhood, which is presented to them by their not impartial memory as a time of uninterrupted bliss". *Moses and Monotheism* (III) The Latency Period and Tradition. Vol 23, Standard Edition, p.71 Is this time of uninterrupted bliss what Paterson had in mind as the time before? One recalls Housman's 'land of lost content' where 'I went and cannot come again'. The reverberation however, is offered by memory. See Housman's 'A Shropshire Lad' XL in A.E. Housman Collected Poems & Selected Prose Ed, Christopher Ricks. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968, p. 64

¹⁰² See my own poem 'Second Earlies', as an example of the formative influence of this time.

¹⁰³ Another version of this is found in an interview by Sally Vincent with the American novelist Allison Lurie where she talks of the effect of reading a Lurie novel: 'You get haunted afterwards; long,

long afterwards, as though you have carelessly taken in a kind of condensed reality that then becomes reconstituted into something momentous you have already known, but didn't know you knew.' *What You Always Knew*, The Guardian Weekend, 17/9/05, p.105

¹⁰⁴ The reference to 'bells, backwards into time' is reminiscent of the sound of the smith's hammer, which rings out time and again, as the theme in Elizabeth Bishop's story *In the Village*.

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Woolf, in 'The Spoken Word' Compilation by Steve Cleary, Richard Fairman, Toby Oakes. CD The British Library Board, 2000. NSA CD 12, ISBN 0-7123-0516-5 track 13. Originally Broadcast 29/4/1937.

¹⁰⁶ It seems important to note that a couple on nights ago I dreamt of a friend of mine who is a poet. In the dream he telephoned to tell me that he and his partner had just had a baby.

¹⁰⁷ Looking back, as I edit the text, I am struck by the arrival of a poem of my own. Originally entitled *Aftermath* it is now *Wraiths*.

¹⁰⁸ The film, *The Weeping Camel*, showed a Mongol family in the Gobi desert desperately trying to get the last born of the year's colts to suckle from its mother. I was moved by the poignancy of the basic theme of nurture but also remembering how many of the tricks of the trade I recalled from the farm, though the animal was different.

¹⁰⁹ There are reverberations here with my own poem, *The Leveller*.